Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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Volume XXXII, Issue No. 246
MONDAY DECEMBER 12, 2022
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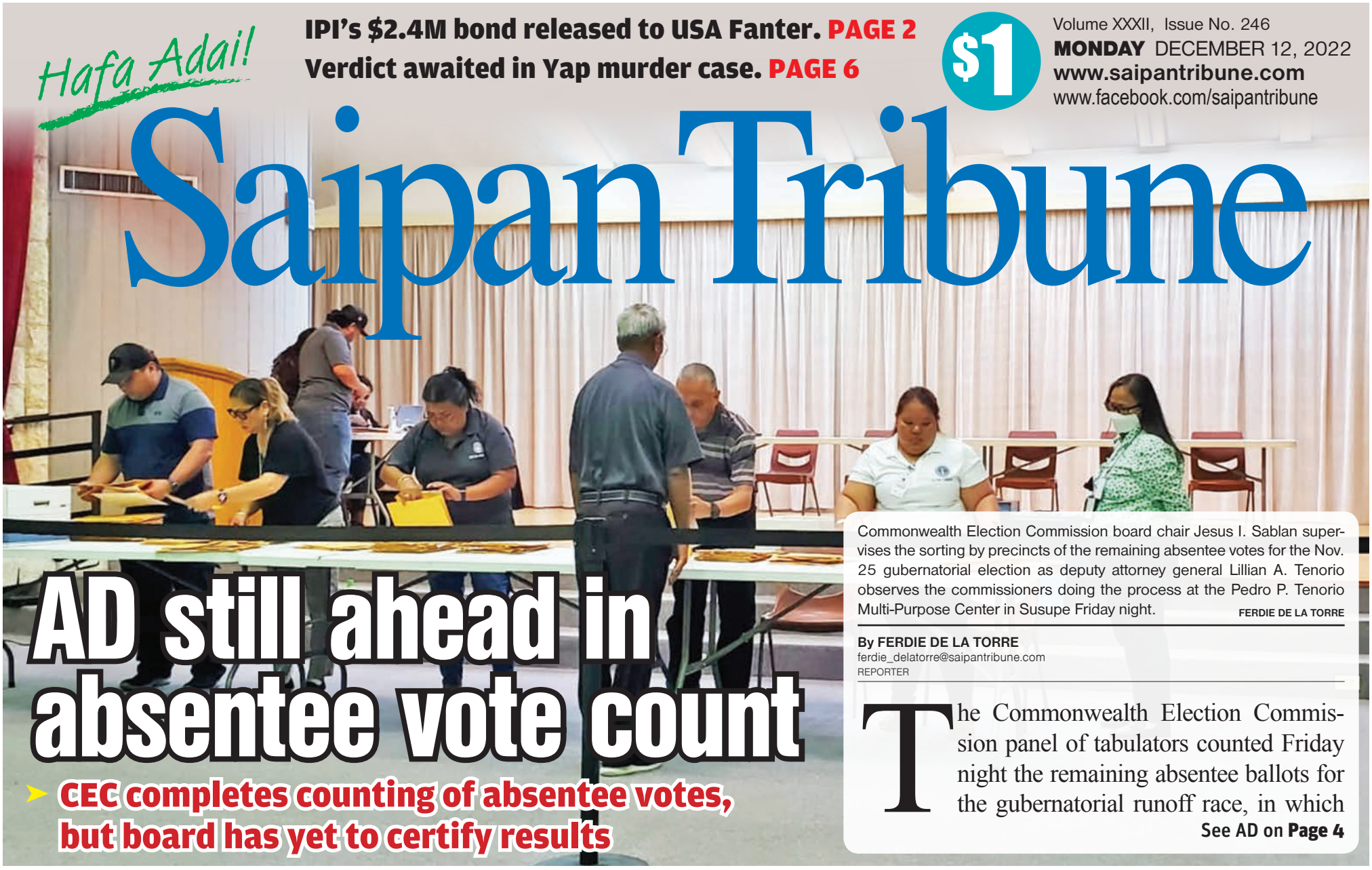
IPI's $2.4M bond released to USA Fanter. PAGE 2
Verdict awaited in Yap murder case. PAGE 6



Commonwealth Election Commission board chair Jesus I. Sablan supervises the sorting by precincts of the remaining absentee votes for the Nov. 25 gubernatorial election as deputy attorney general Lillian A. Tenorio observes the commissioners doing the process at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe Friday night. FERDIE DE LA TORRE

AD still ahead in absentee vote count

CEC completes counting of absentee votes, but board has yet to certify results

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Election Commission panel of tabulators counted Friday night the remaining absentee ballots for the gubernatorial runoff race, in which

See AD on Page 4

Chinese tourism market could return next year

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI is still on the economic road to recovery after losing its main source of revenue—tourism—at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, the Korean and Japanese markets have begun to trickle in, with the Chinese market anticipated to follow suit in the spring or summer of 2023.

The Chinese market has been the CNMI's biggest market for years, followed closely by Korea and Japan but, following the COVID-19 pandemic, China has been

See CHINESE on Page 4

DPS looking into video of weaponry circulating on social media

The Department of Public Safety is looking into a video circulating on social media sources containing images of weaponry.

In a news release last night, DPS said it was advised of a possible threat of violence being circulated yesterday afternoon, "and we would like to thank the community for keeping us informed whenever they come across these forwarded posts. As with all reports and complaints, we take this with the utmost seriousness and will be investigating this video thoroughly.

See DPS on Page 4

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

The U.S. Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training Program will be fielding 125 staff members to the CNMI for two weeks in July next year to provide free health, dental, and optometric services, among others, in the Commonwealth.

To be called "Operation Wellness CNMI," residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will

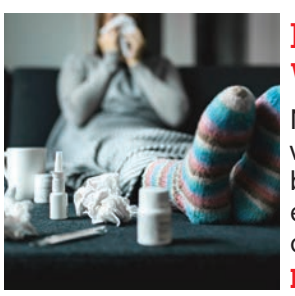
See FREE on Page 4

From left, Tech. Sgt Otis Youngblood, Lt. Col. Andrew Adamich, Jonas Okawa, Master Sgt. Tammy Annis, Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs' Daisy Babauta, Capt. Penny Cannon, Liela Yumul, Maj. Samantha Madsen, CBMA chief and special assistant for Military Affairs Glenna Sakisat Palacios, Maj. Daniel LaVorgna, SFC Tausha Harr, CHCC's John Tagabuel, Capt. Chrystal Warburton, CBMA's Coryn Achas, LTC Eugene Johnson. In 2023, the "Operation Wellness CNMI" IRT Project will provide residents of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota with full medical support services by the various service components of the Department of Defense. LEIGH GASES

Free medical, dental, other services in July

INSIDE

ASIA
Hundreds of people march in Manila, protesting a rising number of extrajudicial killings.
PAGE 13



HEALTH & WELLNESS
New research has revealed a physical link between chilly weather and the severity of colds.
PAGE 14

LIFE & STYLE
Celine Dion has put a halt on all performing after being diagnosed with a rare neurological disorder.
PAGE 15

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

IPI's $2.4M bond released to USA Fanter

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Now that the U.S. Court of Appeals has ruled on the appeal filed by Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC in the lawsuit filed by US. Fanter Corp. Ltd., the U.S. District Court for the NMI has ordered the release of the $2.4 million supersedeas bond that IPI had posted pending its appeal.

District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona Manglona issued the order last week releasing the $2.4 million to USA Fanter pursuant to a previous stipulation, or agreement, made by the parties.

The agreement, which the parties made back in 2021, was that, pending IPI's appeal of the court's decision in the lawsuit filed by USA Fanter, IPI would post a $2.4 million supersedeas bond to stay the judgment that ruled in favor of USA Fanter and the limited receivership that has now been assumed by other IPI creditors.

Now that the appellate court has reaffirmed the District Court for the NMI's ruling, the agreement states that the bond must be released to a trust account under Thompson Law LLC, the law office that represents USA Fanter.

"Based on the stipulation of the parties, the record, and for good cause shown, the court orders Suretec Insurance Company transfer the entire amount of the supersedeas bond of $2,450,000 to the Thompson Law, LLC client trust account immediately, to be held in trust subject to further orders of this court," said Manglona.

"Upon receipt of the supersedeas bond funds, Thompson Law is ordered to promptly transfer to USA Fanter, the judgment amount of $2,089,345.28," she added.

See IPI on Page 4

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Judiciary to hold 10th Law and the Freshman Legislator Seminar

The Judiciary has scheduled the Law and the Freshman Legislator Seminar on Friday, Jan. 6, 2023, during which judges of the NMI Judiciary and U.S. District Court will give several presentations to the newly elected members of the CNMI Legislature.

All nine newly-elected legislators—one senator and eight representatives—have been invited to attend the program at the Guma' Hustisia. Those legislators are:

- Senator-elect Dennis C. Mendiola (Rota)
- Representative-elect Vincent S. Aldan (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Diego F. Camacho (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Manny T. Castro (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Marissa Flores (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Malcom Omar (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Angelo A. Camacho (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Thomas DLC Manglona (Saipan)
- Representative-elect Julie A. Ogo (Rota)

The full program includes a lecture on the Covenant, the CNMI and U.S. constitutions, an overview of the judicial process, a discussion of common law, a presentation on legal research, and a roundtable discussion between newly-elected representatives and local and federal judges.

"We are enthusiastically awaiting this year's Law and the Freshman Legislator Seminar," said Alexandro C. Castro, chief justice of the NMI Supreme Court. "The program has always been an excellent way for the judges and court staff to meet our new representatives and for those representatives to revisit the operations of the judicial branch of government."

The Judiciary held the first installment of the seminar in 2004, and 80 legislators have participated since that time. Positive reviews of the program's informative and constructive nature have led to continued demand. ***(PR)***

US House OKs defense bill; includes $191M for Tinian airfield projects, some Kilili's bills

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the compromise National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 Thursday that includes several provisions that benefit the CNMI such as the $191 million for three Tinian divert airfield projects, according to Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) Saturday.

Sablan

Sablan stated in his *e-kilili* newsletter that the annual defense bill authorizes $847 billion to support service members, invest in advanced technology, bolster common defense, and maintain national strength at home and abroad.

Of the $191 million allocated for Tinian divert projects, $92 million is for fuel tanks with pipeline and hydrants, $58 million is for airfield development phase 1, and $41 million is for a parking apron.

He said the annual defense legislation includes his bill, H.R. 3730, which gives veterans from the CNMI, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Freely Associated States an advisory committee within the Department of Veterans Affairs to commend improvements in delivery of benefits and services to insular veterans.

Sablan said the defense bill also includes his Shark Fin Sales Elimination Act, which addresses the sharp decline in shark populations worldwide by banning the commercial trade of sharp fins within the U.S.

He said this ban mirrors Marianas law and several U.S. states that already bans the sale, purchase, or possession of shark fins.

Then-governor Benigno R. Fitial signed in 2011 a bill into Public Law 17-27 that prohibits any person from possessing, selling, offering for sale, trading or distributing shark fins in the CNMI.

The delegate said another provision in the defense bill is the Reauthorization of the Coral Reef Conservation Act, which increases funds for coral reel conservation activities to support the CNMI's tourism economy and to maintain the ecological health of the islands.

Sablan said additional provisions include a 4.6% pay increase for service members, increased basic allowance for housing, and protects survivors of sexual harassment in the military by placing investigations outside the immediate chain of command.

He said the defense bill, likely to pass for the 62nd consecutive year, is expected to be considered by the U.S. Senate shortly and signed by President Joe Biden into law.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
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Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
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Eli D. Cabrera
Administrator

Richard V. Salas
Director, DCRM

PUBLIC NOTICE

AGENCY BOARD TRAINING

In conformity with the Open Government Act, this is to give notice that the CRM Agency Board will engage in a Board Training on Friday, December 16, 2022, from 9AM to 10AM, 2nd Floor Horiguchi Building in Garapan, Saipan.

The training will include as follows:

(1) Board members logging into Bluebeam
(2) How to receive an invite from Bluebeam
(3) How to use Bluebeam to complete a review
(4) How Bluebeam integrates with Energov

Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the upcoming Agency Board Training.

/s/ Richard V. Salas
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

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Public warned of high surf, rip currents today

A high surf advisory is now in effect for north and east facing reefs on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota until 6am today, Monday. There is also a high risk of rip currents for north and east facing reefs in the CNMI through late Monday night.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, large breaking waves of 7 to 9 feet are expected in the surf zone along north facing reefs. Along east facing reefs, large breaking waves of 10 to 12 feet are expected. Dangerous rip currents are also forecasted.

For the high surf advisory, the areas affected are east and north east facing reefs of the Marianas. For the high risk of rip currents, it will affect east and north facing reefs of the Marianas.

These conditions will create dangerous swimming and surfing conditions and localized beach erosion. Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

A surge in long-period trade-wind swell will maintain a high risk of rip currents through early this week. Surf will remain at hazardous levels along north and east facing reefs through at least Monday morning.

Inexperienced swimmers should remain out of the water due to dangerous surf conditions.

The public is advised to stay out of the water along north and east facing reef lines. Swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. ***(PR/Saipan Tribune)***

FREE

From Page 1

receive free dentistry, optometry, general health and wellness, behavioral health, dietitian, public health education, and veterinary services from July 9 to July 23, 2023.

This was learned during press briefing last Friday at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan, with Innovative Readiness Training program manager Maj. Daniel LaVorgna saying that "Operation Wellness CNMI" will have the U.S. Army Reserve leading the program, along with the Air National Guard, active-duty U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy, and the Air Force Reserves, "so it's [going to] be very much a joint type mission."

LaVorgna, who was in the CNMI last June during a free veterinary mission where they serviced over 300 pets in the CNMI, said the upcoming project will be "the first time to do this level of expansion. Last [fiscal] year, we just did vet services—we just did sterilization for animals and some minor surgeries. So, this [coming] year, we're expanding this to the CNMI population."

LaVorgna said that July's IRT outreach will give the service components of the U.S. armed forces "an opportunity to do some hands-on training, because a lot of our training platforms don't give people the ability to… do some real-world training, so this kind of affords them that opportunity to do that. Of course…for the community, they get the incidental benefit…of the services that we would come on in and provide. It's a win-win, really."

The project is made possible by the Commonwealth Bureau of Military Affairs, at the direction of Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, in partnership with LaVorgna, IRT program manager of the US Army Command.

CBMA and the U.S. Army Command kicked off their joint IRT project with the initial weeklong planning conference last week.

CBMA is mandated, in part, "to facilitate the integration of military personnel into our community; to seek out employment and economic development opportunities; and to pursue a mutually beneficial partnership between the CNMI and Department of Defense, among other things."

Through its Community Relations Program, CBMA is tapping into DoD programs that provide mutual benefits to the military and the CNMI community, said Glenna Sakisat Palacios, special assistant for Military Affairs.

"Similar to the IRT Veterinary Services that was successfully executed last summer, the Operation CNMI Wellness Project is an expansion of our [community relations] program initiative to integrate military resources that would provide impactful benefits to our community, said Palacios.

She thanked LaVorgna "for his guidance and support to secure approval of our community application, and for working closely with CBMA and participating partners to bring this much needed services to the CNMI. I also extend our appreciation to both our military and local community partners for their commitments to ensure this important project will be executed successfully this summer for the mutual benefits of our CNMI residents and our military personnel."

LaVorgna, for his part, acknowledged Palacios' role in bringing the IRT to the CNMI.

"I cannot overstate the level of importance that Ms. Glenna Palacios has played in getting this program started," said LaVorgna. "She is instrumental in bringing the IRT to the CNMI. She worked tirelessly behind the scenes to get this off the ground, working with me to ensure funding and legal requirements of the application process is met, close coordination among participating units from 14 time zones away, and we could not have done it without her and we definitely appreciate her partnership."

CHINESE

From Page 1

among the last countries to lift its strict COVID-19 restrictions, which in turn has resulted in the absence of the market from the CNMI for nearly three years now.

Fortunately, according to Marianas Visitors Authority board member Ivan Quichocho, MVA is hopeful that the market will return sometime next year and tourism for the CNMI could possibly see pre-pandemic numbers by 2024.

"There is a lot of noise right now in China about the zero-COVID policy, meaning the central government of China might be motivated to start lifting the restrictions of zero-COVID sooner rather than later. Because of this, we are optimistic that around spring or summer next year, we might be able to see the return of the China market," he said.

Quichocho, who spoke at the MVA general membership meeting last Thursday, stated that MVA is hopeful that China will ease its zero-COVID policy, allowing its people to travel at ease again.

He added that in the event China does ease back its restrictions, MVA is ready to work with partners in China to resume direct service to the CNMI as soon as possible.

"We're all very hopeful because they're a very significant part of our tourism arrival. As a matter of fact, the Chinese arrival, part of them came over [from] Korea. What that does is it provides Korean airlines a healthy load so they in turn can continue to add more flights to the CNMI to take on the demand. But nothing beats direct service and the Chinese market lifts restrictions, we can very quickly work with our partners in China to resume direct service," he said.

As for creating a travel bubble for Chinese visitors, Quichocho said that will be at the discretion of the Chinese government, whether they would prefer to establish one with the CNMI or not.

"It's all up to China because there are still some places, like Hong Kong, where you still need a [COVID-19] test upon arrival, then another test a day after. Even after that, you're still a Code Yellow, meaning you can't go into restaurants and establishments. Until we can see the lifting of that, that will usher in the reopening of the China market," he said.

In preparation for the return of the Chinese market, Quichocho said the CNMI is ready in terms of hotel rooms, services, and even new establishments that would surely pique the interests of either returning or new Chinese tourists.

"We have a lot of hotel rooms open in the case these restrictions are lifted soon. Our travel industry partners have also started to bring their employees back to work to accommodate our tourists. There have also been a lot of new investments on the ground like new restaurants," he stated.

The MVA general membership meeting was held last week at the Pacific Islands Club Saipan. It was the MVA's first general membership meeting that was held face to face in the last two years due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Present at the meeting were CNMI stakeholders and Korea and Japan travel partners.

AD

From Page 1

258 votes went to Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and his running mate, Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang, of the unified independent team, and 200 were for Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and his running mate, Sen. Vinnie Vinson F. Sablan (R-Saipan), of the Republican Party.

The CEC board, however, did not certify the runoff election results Friday due to some challenged absentee votes, according to CEC executive director Kayla S. Igitol over the weekend.

Once the challenged votes are resolved, Igitol said, the board will then certify the results, which may take place probably this week.

She explained yesterday that a total of 78 absentee votes have been challenged and set aside for now.

With the counting of the remaining absentees votes Friday, Palacios-Apatang garnered a total of 7,335 votes, or 54.12% of the total votes, while Torres-Sablan received a total of 6,217 votes, or 45.87%.

During the counting of runoff votes last Nov. 26, Palacios-Apatang enjoyed a commanding 1,060 votes, prompting Torres-Sablan to concede their defeat.

The CEC unofficial tabulation results at that time, Nov. 26, showed that Torres-Sablan got 140 absentee votes, while Palacios-Apatang obtained 138.

After the counting of the remaining absentee votes, Palacios-Apatang took the lead in the absentee voting as they garnered a total of 396 votes, while Torres-Sablan got a total of 340 votes.

At 11am Friday, CEC staff, accompanied by some police officers and Office of the Public Auditor representatives, picked up the remaining 859 envelopes containing absentee ballots from the U.S. Postal Service in Chalan Kanoa, and brought them to the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center for tabulations. Some envelopes contained two or more votes.

The group went back to the postal service Friday at about 3:30pm, but there were no more absentee envelopes that came in.

In total, 458 remaining votes were counted Friday as some ballots were not postmarked, while others were postmarked after the Nov. 25 deadline.

As of 5:10pm Friday, commissioners led by board chair Jesus I. Sablan were still sorting the ballots by precincts. The commissioners, who served as the panel of tabulators, completed the counting at 7pm. Deputy attorney general Lillian A. Tenorio and a representative from OPA watched the process.

When asked about her overall assessment of the runoff election, Igitol said yesterday that it went well besides the campaigning within the 300 feet from polling sites.

"I believe my staff, CEC board did an awesome job and we conducted a fair, honest, and transparent election," Igitol said.

DPS

From Page 1

"At this time the department is not able to confirm if this video was recorded recently or locally.

"DPS also would like to emphasize that the community's safety is our No. 1 priority.

"We ask that the public remain vigilant and continue to report anything suspicious. Anyone with information about the clip's origin is encouraged to call the Criminal Investigations Division at 664-9064 or 911, or the CNMI Crime Stoppers hotline at 234-7272. ***(DPS)***

IPI

From Page 2

Back in February 2021, the court issued a partial summary judgment in favor of USA Fanter. On Feb. 12, 2021, the court entered a judgment in favor of USA Fanter in the amount of $2,089,345.28. On April 29, 2021, the parties stipulated to $109,060.28 in prejudgment interest.

Following the court's order, IPI appealed the decision to the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

On Dec. 8, 2021, USA Fanter and IPI filed a stipulation regarding a motion to stay judgment pending appeal, through which IPI agreed to secure a supersedeas bond of $2.45 million as surety for the judgment.

On Dec. 13, 2021, IPI provided a notice that supersedeas bond, constituting the full agreed amount was in place.

On Dec. 17, 2021, IPI filed a notice of amendment of supersedeas bond and the supersedeas stay bond.

Last November, the Ninth Circuit affirmed this court's judgment and issued its mandate on Nov. 23, 2022.

USA Fanter had sued IPI for breach of contract after the casino investor allegedly failed to pay the full contract amount due for labor and materials it provided for the improvement of the IPI Casino in Garapan. The lawsuit was filed in February 2021. USA Fanter claimed that IPI only paid USA Fanter $300,000 for the project and the unpaid balance due was not less than $2,089,345.28.

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& TEAM

Verdict awaited in Yap murder case

By JOYCE MCCLURE
PACIFIC ISLAND TIMES

Originally published by Pacific Island Times: https://www.pacificislandtimes.com/post/verdict-awaited-in-yap-s-murder-case

» Defense says suspect only meant to 'scare' Bergeron

Anthony Tun, one of the two suspects in the murder of Yap's acting attorney general Rachelle Bergeron only meant to "scare" the American prosecutor into leaving the island to stall pending criminal cases against his cousin, according to defense attorney Marstella Jack.

Jack said there was no conspiracy, but the government's attorney, Jeffrey S. Tilfas, maintained that Tun and his co-defendant, Francis Chaoy Buchun, "acted in concert" to plan and execute "the violent act."

Regardless of Tun's claim that the purpose of the shooting was to scare Bergeron, Tilfas pointed out that the acting attorney general "was not shot once or twice, but three times from a deadly weapon."

After a monthlong bench trial, the Yap State Court is preparing its decision on the murder case that drew international attention in 2019.

The trial was delayed due to COVID-related border closures that hampered travel logistics and disrupted court proceedings.

The prosecution and defense filed their closing arguments on Nov. 14 and 18 for Tun's case.

Buchun's trial has also been completed. The closing arguments will take place in open court on Dec. 29.

In her closing arguments, Jack claimed Tun shot at Bergeron's surroundings so she would leave the island because she was "going out of her way" to prosecute his cousin Buchun for "several individual offenses."

Bergeron had just returned home from jogging when she was shot dead.

Tun was charged on Nov. 20, 2019, with conspiracy to commit murder, murder, manslaughter, assault with a dangerous weapon, threats and coercion, among others.

The defense stated that there was no proof of a conspiracy to commit murder, and that pointing the weapon, a 12-gauge shotgun, and discharging the three bullets was not "reckless" in a way that demonstrated "extreme indifference to the value of human life."

Tun never had any issue with Bergeron, Jack said. She cited the testimony given by FSM Police Capt. Kasner Aldens, who said that the presumption that Tun was trying to protect his cousin from being charged with criminal offenses was "a dead end."

On the prosecution's side, Tilfas' filing appended 38 exhibits including a recorded interview with Bergeron's husband, Simon Hämmerling, who was at home when the shooting occurred; footage from home security cameras showing Bergeron calling for help; photos of the shotshells and their location; recordings of Buchun and Tun giving voluntary statements; and a recording of the two defendants conversing about disposing of the firearm.

Bergeron

Citing "a crime of ghastly proportions," the prosecution stated that Bergeron was a few feet away from her husband and their adopted daughter when several witnesses heard three "loud bangs."

Tilfas said Tun's confession and Buchun's interview indicated that they planned to shoot Bergeron and scouted the location prior to the crime.

According to the document, Tun loaded all three bullets into the weapon provided by Buchun, waited 30 minutes at the ridgeline across from Bergeron's residence, and "pulled the trigger until all three ammunitions loaded were fired and ejected."

Tun left the spent shells at the scene where they were later collected by the police. He later revealed that the gun was hidden in tall grass at the shoreline of Taneyboch in Chamorro Bay.

Even if the court finds that there was no intention to kill Bergeron, the prosecution said, Tun's confession and Buchun's interview proved "more than a reasonable doubt" that there was an attempt to harm Bergeron.

The prosecution noted that Tun had firearm training while serving as an MP officer in the past.

Evidence also showed that Bergeron tried to escape after the first shot, but fell on the ground. She was then shot two more times, resulting in multiple wounds including one to her heart, the prosecution added.

As for the terrorizing charges, the prosecution noted that Hämmerling and their adopted daughter were indeed terrorized.

The prosecution said the evidence showed that Tun "did the heinous act" to stop Bergeron from prosecuting Buchun, who was charged with human trafficking.

Defense witness Nathaniel Linglemog testified that Buchun's uncle, Francis Tamag, went to his house and warned him that "if Rachelle put her nose where it does not belong, something might happen to her."

According to the prosecution, Linglemog's testimony indicated Tun's participation in an attempt to interfere with justice.

The FSM Supreme Court has scheduled the hearings for the national charges of weapon and ammunition possession for February 2023.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

Main Office: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
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P.O. BOX 501055 • SAIPAN • MP 96950
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Website: www.cnmiports.com

NOTICE OF BOARD COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority hereby gives notice that there will be Board Committee Meetings on Monday, December 19, 2022, at 9:30 a.m. in the Tinian Conference Center inside of the Tinian Western Lodge in San Jose, Tinian. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

COMMITTEE AGENDAS

PERSONNEL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (November 03, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business: None
  1. CPA Employee Handbook
  2. Revision of Position Description for IT
  3. Drug Policy
IV. New Business:
  1. DRAFT Position Description: Lease Compliance Clerk
  2. Supervisor Evaluation
  3. Updated Personnel Affairs Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

AIRPORT FACILITIES COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (November 03, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
  1. Solar Request for Proposal (RFP) Status Report
  2. Public-Private Partnership
  3. Request for Proposal for Owner Engineer Agent
IV. New Business:
  1. Retail Concession (Rota)
    a. Determination of Scope
    b. Procurement method
    c. Evaluation Plan
  2. Authority Concession Grant (CPA-RFP-011-22)
  3. Updated Airport Facilities Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

SEAPORT FACILITIES COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (November 03, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
  1. Saipan Shipping Lease
IV. New Business:
  1. Updated Seaport Facilities Committee Report
V. Executive Session (if needed)
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

I. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of Agenda, Adoption of Minutes (November 03, 2022)
II. Public Comments
III. Old Business:
  1. Audit Corrective Action Update
IV. New Business:
  1. Supplemental Budget Request: Saipan ARFF Training Facility Typhoon Repairs Professional Services
  2. Supplemental Budget Request: Saipan Airport Roll Up Doors Replacement Construction Management Services
  3. Supplemental Budget Request: Tinian Airport CBP/TSA Implementation A&E Design Services
  4. Procurement Regulations: Small Purchase
  5. Updated Financial Affairs Committee Report
V. Executive Session
VI. Miscellaneous/Announcements
VII. Adjournment

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. A time limit may be imposed. Video Conferencing is also available via Zoom. Zoom link: Meeting ID: 868 9696 0949 Passcode: CPAboard

Barrie C. Toves, Airport Facilities Chair | Ramon A. Tebuteb, Financial Affairs Chair | Pete P. Reyes, Seaport Facilities Chair | Joseph M. Diaz, Personnel Affairs Chair

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Fax (670) 233-0790

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO BID (ITB)
ITB23-CHCC/P&S-003

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: DEC. 16, 2022 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"SALE OF CHCC USED VEHICLES"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS INVITATION TO BID FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE [WWW.CHCC.HEALTH]. ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR. CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO E TER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS TO ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

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E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

NOTICE OF REGULAR MEETING

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) hereby gives notice that a Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Monday, December 19, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. in the Tinian Conference Center inside of the Tinian Western Lodge in San Jose, Tinian. The following items are on the agenda for the above-referenced meeting:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
  1. Call to Order
  2. Roll Call
  3. Adoption of Agenda
  4. Adoption of Minutes (November 03, 2022)
II. PUBLIC COMMENT(S)
III. CORRESPONDENCES
IV. COMMITTEE REPORTS
  1. Financial Affairs Committee
  2. Airport Facilities Committee
  3. Seaport Facilities Committee
  4. Personnel Affairs Committee
V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
VI. OLD BUSINESS:
  1. Revision of Position Description for IT
  2. Request for Proposal for Owner Engineer Agent
  3. Saipan Shipping Lease
VII. NEW BUSINESS:
  1. Resolution 2022-02: Resolution honoring the late Antonio S. Camacho, Jr.
  2. Procurement Regulations: Small Purchase
  3. Retail Concession (Rota)
    a. Determination of Scope
    b. Procurement method
    c. Evaluation Plan
  4. Authority Concession Grant (CPA-RFP-011-22)
  5. CPA Employee Handbook
  6. Drug Policy
  7. DRAFT Position Description: Lease Compliance Clerk
  8. Supervisor Evaluation
  9. Supplemental Budget Request: Saipan ARFF Training Facility Typhoon Repairs Professional Services
  10. Supplemental Budget Request: Saipan Airport Roll Up Doors Replacement Construction Management Services
  11. Supplemental Budget Request: Tinian Airport CBP/TSA Implementation A&E Design Services
VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION
  • Legal Counsel Reports: Legal matters/Litigation
IX. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS
X. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. A time limit may be imposed. Video Conferencing is also available via Zoom. Zoom link: Zoom link: Meeting ID: 868 9696 0949 Passcode: CPAboard

ROMAN T. TUDELA
Acting Chairman, Board of Directors

December 09, 2022

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PAROLE
P.O. BOX 502641, Saipan, MP 96950-2641
Tel: Nos.: (670) 664-3300 • FAX: (670) 664-3310
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TO ALL MEDIA SERVICES
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

MESSAGE: The Honorable Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres and the Honorable Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the CNMI Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992," hereby give "Official Notice" that a **Clemency/Pardon Hearing** is scheduled for **December 15-16 at 9:00 am daily** at the CNMI Board of Parole Office Building 1216, located at Capitol Hill, Saipan MP 96950. The following individual (s) will appear before the CNMI Board of Parole.

Applicant	Criminal Case Number
1. Olen K. Jacob	96-182 (R)
2. Daniel M. Quitugua	97-0216/14-0060/19-0121
3. Jose O. Rabauliman	98-0083A
4. Natividad C. Sablan	04-0361D
5. Geraldine D. Sebaklim	04-0361D
6. Kenny C. Cruz	05-0118
7. Alfredo L. Saures	06-0174E
8. Ambrosio Ogumoro	12-0134/15-0055
9. Edward A. Deleon Guerrero	13-0034

Should you have any further inquiries, or need any additional information, please contact the CNMI Board of Parole Office at telephone number (670) 664-3300.

/s/ Michael H. San Nicolas
Chairman
CNMI Board of Parole

12/09/2022
Date

MVA inks MOU with Korean professional baseball group

MVA

Marianas Visitors Authority board chairwoman Viola Alepuyo, seated left, and Korean Professional Baseball Players Association chairman Yang Eui Ji, seated right, signed a MOU of cooperation on Dec. 1, 2022, in Seoul, Korea. Also pictured, standing from left, MVA Korea sales manager Esther Oh, MVA Korea country manager Sejin Kim, MVA acting managing director Judy Torres, Tourism Resumption Investment Plan Korea chairman Tommy Kim, TRIP chairman Ivan Quichocho, MVA Korea Team head Chanho Hong, MVA board vice chairwoman Gloria Cavanagh, KPBPA director (SSG Baseball Team) Han Yoosum, KPBPA director (LG Baseball Team) Oh Jihwan, KPBPA secretary general Jan Dong-cheol, and KPBPA team leader Jo Youngjoo.

In a major step forward in its sports tourism agenda, the Marianas Visitors Authority signed a one-year memorandum of understanding in Seoul on Dec. 1, 2022, with the Korean Professional Baseball Players Association.

The agreement was inked by MVA board chairwoman Viola Alepuyo and KPBPA chairman Yang Eiu Ji at a signing ceremony at Mayfield Hotel.

In general, the MOU aims to promote the Marianas and improve the welfare of KPBPA players through cooperative activities. Most immediately, professional players are part of a 70-member contingent that arrived on Saipan yesterday, Dec. 11, as part of a media tour by one of the largest national television networks in Korea, MBC TV.

"It is a great honor for us to be here and to sign this memorandum of understanding," said Alepuyo at the signing ceremony. "We are excited to start our [sports] tourism industry, and even more excited that the Korea Professional Baseball Players Association will be coming to the CNMI to help us boost our sports tourism market. We hope to have a very fruitful relationship."

In the past, the Marianas has welcomed professional baseball teams from Korea and Japan for training, including the Lotte Giants. Under the MOU, the MVA will facilitate KPBPA access to baseball fields on Saipan for practice or other activities. With this month's visit of KPBPA players as part of the media tour, young players of Saipan Little League will also have the opportunity to interact with players at a baseball workshop.

MVA

Marianas Visitors Authority board chairwoman Viola Alepuyo, left, and Korean Professional Baseball Players Association chairman Yang Eui Ji sign an MOU on Dec. 1, 2022, in Seoul, Korea, agreeing to cooperate on activities that promote the Marianas and improve the welfare of KPBPA players.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
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234-7670
Fax: (670) 234-9021

PUBLIC NOTICE

(This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD Funds)
December 12, 2022

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, and the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairwoman, Ms. Marcie M. Tomokane, wish to announce that its **Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) for Program Year 2021** is available for review. Comments made by the general public should be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 27, 2022. Written comments must be submitted to the NMHC Office in Garapan, Saipan, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, or by contacting Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director, at 234-9447/7689.

The report will be submitted to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Honolulu Office, on or before December 30, 2022. The CAPER encompasses the performance assessment of all HUD-funded programs, administered by the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The report is available at the NMHC Central Office in Saipan and at the respective NMHC Field Offices in Rota and Tinian during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays. Individuals needing special accommodations to review and comment on the plan must contact the Planning Division for arrangements by calling (670) 234-7689/6866 during regular business hours.

Marcie M. Tomokane
Chairwoman of the Board

GUAM & COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

WEBEX MEETING DECEMBER 13, 2022

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Honolulu Regional Office - Public Contact Team

Will host a Virtual Benefits Workshop for Veterans, Family Members, Surviving Spouses, and Community Providers
on
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2022

From
4PM-6PM (GUAM & CNMI LOCAL TIME)

To participate please join us in Cisco Webex by clicking or copying and pasting the below links into your browser:

https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=m7b636ab69fa2b305ad40fd979f718d61

You can join via Computer, Phone Audio (1-404-397-1596, 27608180560##), or Webex Mobile App. Meeting Password: AYnmf7VT*36

Benefits Workshop Topics:
Compensation, Service Connection, Pension, Homeless, COD, MST, Women Veterans, Education & Training, Veteran Readiness & Employment, PACT Act, Home Loan Guaranty, DIC, Survivors' Pension, & Burial and Plot Internment Allowance

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXII, Issue No. 246
Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

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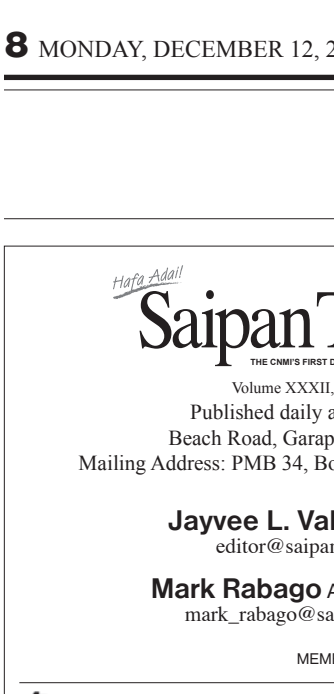
EDITORIAL

A bittersweet return: We welcome Brittney Griner home, at a cost

Planes land on U.S. territory every day, but one particular flight touching down has been hotly anticipated for months and brings with it great news and precious cargo: WNBA star Brittney Griner, who was arrested at the Moscow airport in February on a trumped-up charge of bringing illegal drugs into the country and how now been released in a prisoner swap.



Griner

Let's be clear about something: Griner was effectively a political prisoner. Her crime—inadvertently packing a couple of cannabis-oil cartridges, which she had a medical prescription for, into her luggage when traveling to Russia—should have warranted a warning, maybe a small fine. In no rational system did it warrant a nine-year term in a penal colony, an eye-popping sentence even in a country as used to carceral punishment as ours.

The same can't be said for the other side of the swap, convicted arms trafficker Viktor Bout, a man whose illicit businesses scattered weapons across volatile conflicts in multiple continents, and who likely still has the contacts and the resources to do damage. It's a good thing that Griner was released, but an indisputably bad one that Bout did too, and the U.S. certainly got a raw deal.

No doubt that the Russians will claim that Bout did nothing wrong, but the evidence against him is overwhelming. No case really had to be built against Griner, who committed one minor infraction and did not try to obscure it at all. Let's hope this doesn't give the Russians the idea that they can feel free to help themselves to any American visitor who they can plausibly hit with charges that'll stick with the hope of getting their people sprung from prison.

Left behind are Americans like Paul Whelan, a former U.S. Marine who was jailed for what seems like a bogus espionage charge levied against him four years ago, and who did not benefit from the same public pressure campaign that kept the administration's focus on springing Griner. We should not forget about them.

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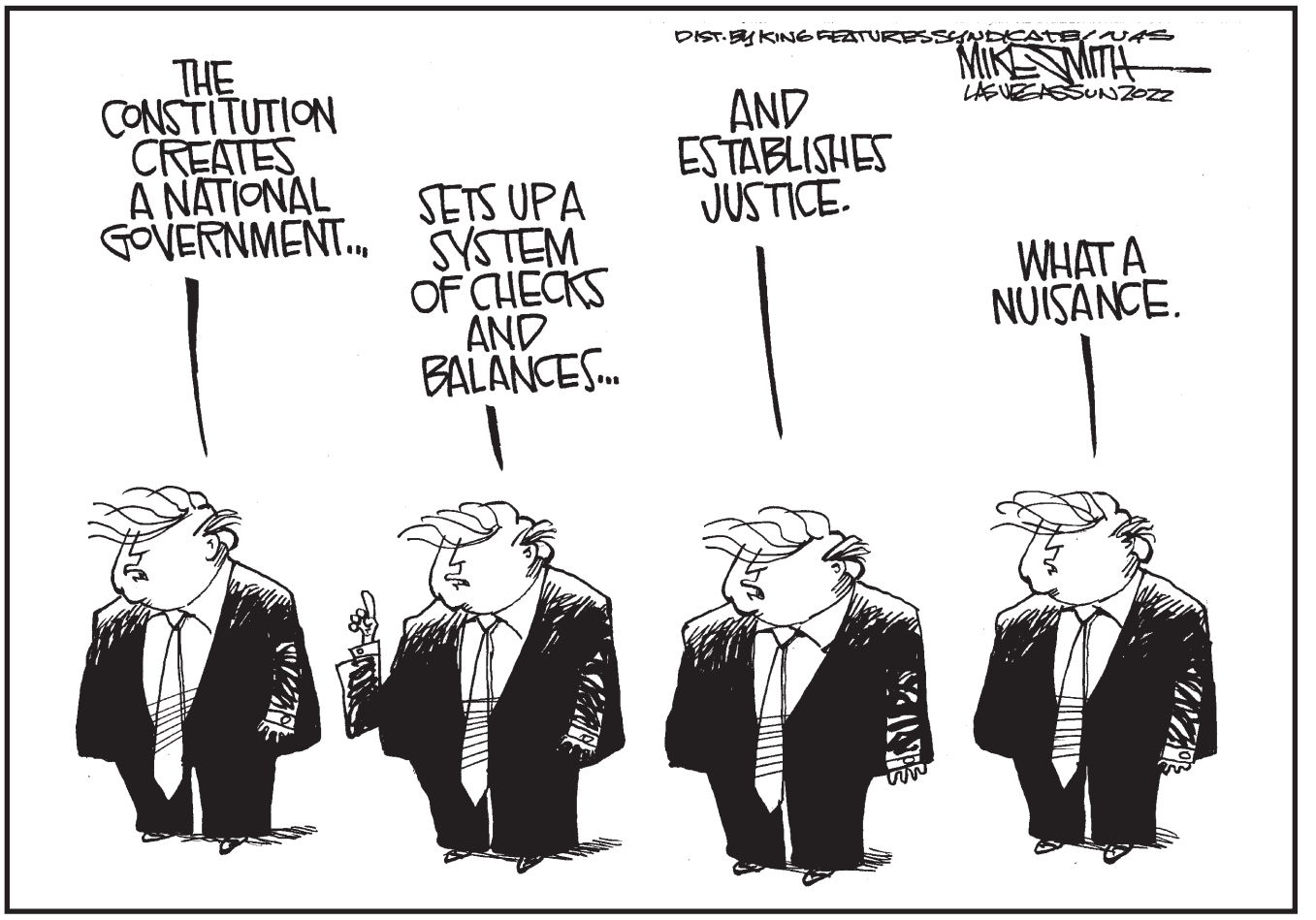
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MIKE SMITH
LAS VEGAS SUN 2022
THE CONSTITUTION CREATES A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT...
SETS UP A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES...
AND ESTABLISHES JUSTICE.
WHAT A NUISANCE.

Here's how to even out the 'burden-sharing' for Ukraine

By RAJAN MENON
Los Angeles Times

Rajan Menon is director of the grand strategy program at Defense Priorities, and a senior research scholar at the Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University.

Vladimir Putin must be, to say the least, disappointed—and not merely because, nine months on, Russia remains mired in a war against Ukraine that he had expected to win rapidly. Contrary to his hopes, divergent national interests haven't split the 30-country trans-Atlantic alliance that has been supporting Kyiv. NATO, large and unwieldy, sometimes quarrelsome, has remained remarkably united.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization imposed the toughest sanctions ever on Russia, rushed critically important weaponry to Ukraine and supported a Ukrainian economy severely strained by the war.

Yet as the war drags on, tensions could arise in its ranks—there are signs already—over "burden-sharing."

This term is typically used in discussions about relative defense spending within NATO, mainly by Americans who want Europeans to spend more. But eventually the Ukraine war could create discord over a different kind of burden-sharing: comparative contributions to assisting Ukraine.

Military support to Ukraine, even considering the important role some NATO countries —notably the United Kingdom, which has provided $1.5 billion worth—have played has been essentially an American operation. About 80% of the weaponry—in dollar value—received by Kyiv since Feb. 24 has come from the United States, which has committed more than $19 billion in military assistance.

This reflects the size of Washington's military resources. President Joe Biden's defense budget request for the 2023 fiscal year totals $813 billion, a sum Congress is expected to add to. That's more than the next 11 countries combined spent on defense last year.

But when it comes to economic assistance, the United States' allies possess the means to provide Ukraine far more help than they have.

According to the World Bank, in 2021, measured in purchasing power parity, the gross domestic product of the United States was $20.9 trillion, the European Union's $19.7 trillion. Throw in the U.K. ($3.1 trillion) and the slim U.S. lead vanishes. Yet the Kiel Institute for the World Economy's Ukraine Support Tracker shows a large gulf between the budgetary aid the United States has provided Ukraine compared with the EU's contribution. As of Oct. 3, the U.S. had disbursed $8.5 billion, the EU $3.6 billion (of the $12.3 billion it committed), and the U.K. delivered $0.6 billion, half of its commitment.

The U.S.-Europe aid gap is unwarranted for two reasons. First, the combined GDP of the EU and the U.K. exceeds that of the United States; so unlike on the military-support front, lack of capacity is not the problem. Second, because the United States provides the lion's share of military assistance to Ukraine, it's reasonable to expect that the EU and the U.K. together should equal, if not surpass, it in economic aid.

When asked about the imbalance, EU officials claim that the $3.6 billion figure in the union's Ukraine aid omits contributions by individual member states and includes only money from the EU's budget. But even if one adds those other contributions to the mix, the picture doesn't change much, not least because only three of Washington's NATO allies—Britain, Canada and Germany—have provided more than $1 billion individually, never mind that Germany, Europe's powerhouse, had a $4.2 trillion GDP last year.

The lopsidedness persists even when the metric used is all forms of economic aid provided to Ukraine as a percentage of a donor's GDP. According to the Kiel database, only 7 out of the 30 countries assisting Ukraine surpass the United States' 0.2% proportion.

No matter how one slices it, then, burden-sharing on economic aid to Ukraine isn't equitable or justifiable.

The point is not that the United States' allies are deadbeats—they are not—or that economic aid to Ukraine should be mostly Europe's responsibility; the U.S. can afford to help and should.

Still, if the war proves to be protracted, the present pattern in aid contributions may become increasingly unpalatable in Washington, especially if the United States faces an economic downturn.

Then there's the magnitude of Ukraine's needs. Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal estimates that his country will need $38 billion in budgetary aid alone in 2023, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reckons it will require $17 billion more for other nonmilitary needs.

Trans-Atlantic disputes on aid to Ukraine could emerge at a delicate moment. The EU and the U.K. now face economic problems that will get worse before they get better and will therefore be hard-pressed to remove the imbalance in nonmili-

See UKRAINE on Next Page

‘We are ready to answer the call of our people’

On Nov. 8, the people of our great Commonwealth humbled us with your votes of confidence. One by one, you made your voices clear when you cast your ballots for new leadership in the House of Representatives, in the Senate, and in the Executive Branch. Two weeks later, you humbled us again in the runoff election when we became your governor-elect and lieutenant governor-elect.

Un dankulu na si yu’us ma’ase yan ghilisow for your support on the campaign trail, in the general election, and again in the runoff election. We are ready to answer the call of our people and we will honor the trust you bestowed upon us.

Now the real work begins.

Just as we needed your vote on election day, we need your voice and your service to our community these next four years. In the days and weeks ahead, our team will work with the current administration to ensure a smooth transition that will enable us to hit the ground running when we take office on Jan. 9, 2023.

We humbly ask the people in our Commonwealth join us. We’ve seen what happens when we work together. Every house needs a solid foundation and the bedrock of our administration must be built upon a foundation of trust, cooperation, and your willingness to work together.

Our people will face many challenges in the next four years, some of which are beyond our control. With your support and with your continued commitment to our islands, we will meet these challenges side-by-side and overcome all obstacles together.

The story of our people is one of the persistence and perseverance that flourishes when we work together. Now more than ever, our Commonwealth needs the very best you have to offer. Without you, the full potential of our people will never be realized.

By ARNOLD I. PALACIOS and DAVID M. APATANG
Special to the Saipan Tribune

From the offices of governor-elect Arnold I. Palacios and lieutenant governor-elect Dave M. Apatang

Republicans, Democrats and independents; the time has come for all of us to move forward together.

Thank you for your votes, thank you for your support, thank you for your trust.

Biba Marianas!

Inflation is bad, but it could worsen if the US dollar weakens

The U.S. dollar is near its highest level in more than a decade. A strong U.S. dollar has many benefits to consumers. When traveling abroad, goods and services cost less in U.S. dollars, making foreign destinations attractive vacation options for many. Domestically, imported items also cost less in U.S. dollars, with some of these savings passed along to consumers.

At the same time, a strong U.S. dollar means that exported goods and services cost more in foreign countries, putting downward pressure on export sales. Compensating for this effect may require lower prices offered overseas and an associated lower revenue and earnings for U.S. companies.

So far, at least for large companies, this has not been the case. S&P 500 companies generate a significant portion of their revenue and earnings abroad. In fact, based on the first quarter of 2022, those that generated more than one-half of their sales domestically had weaker earnings growth than those companies that generated more than one-half of their sales abroad.

Conventional wisdom is not always accurate, which makes forecasting economic causes and effects so challenging. It also means that setting economic policies is an inexact science at best.

Take for example inflation, which is close to a 40-year high. Shouldn’t a strong U.S. dollar be buffering higher prices?

Surprisingly to some, it has, which means that prices would be even higher if the U.S. dollar were weaker. For example, inflation rates are higher in several other countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

Oil prices have received significant attention. Gasoline prices are routinely between $3.50 and $4 per gallon in the United States. Given that crude oil is priced in U.S. dollars, a strong dollar obfuscates its actual cost.

The current nominal, noninflation-adjusted price of oil has been comparable to the price of $80 to $90 per barrel back in 2011 to 2014. Taking inflation into account, prices are much lower today.

In contrast, oil prices are near all-time highs in Canada and Europe. As much as Americans are not pleased with gas prices at the pump and will not be with the cost of natural gas to heat their homes this winter, Canadians and Europeans are faring even worse. For example, Canadians are paying around $1.70 Canadian dollars for a liter of gasoline, equivalent to around $6.50 per gallon, or $4.80 in U.S. dollars.

What a strong U.S. dollar is doing is clouding the cost of oil that many other countries are paying. If the U.S. dollar weakens, as it inevitably will, the price of oil domestically will surge. This means that $4 per gallon of gasoline at the pump will look like a bargain.

As the Federal Reserve continues to raise interest rates to suppress economic activity, effectively cooling systemwide demand and placing less upward pressure on prices, higher interest rate investments become attractive to foreign investors. This means that demand for U.S. currency is increased, putting more upward pressure on the dollar.

By SHELDON JACOBSON
Chicago Tribune

Sheldon Jacobson is a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Jacobson employs his expertise in data-driven, risk-based decision-making to evaluate and inform public policy.

It’s complicated. And rightly so. Every dial that is turned has unexpected consequences.

Now with Republicans in control of the House, bipartisan support will be needed to affect any legislation that could support the economy and temper inflation. Without such cooperation, gridlock is likely, with President Joe Biden forced to resort to executive orders, which have their limitations.

Polls from the Pew Research Center show that people view inflation as a top issue of concern. What few realize is that the number of tools available to effectively manage a massive economy like that of the United States is limited, and those available are rather blunt with significant time delays to yield effects.

As bad as inflation may seem at this time, it could be worse. If the U.S. dollar weakens, it likely will be.

I’ll bet you didn’t write that—a robot did

In less than a week, more than 1 million people have tried a new AI program that composes everything from emails to essays. Some high school and college students are probably celebrating the prospect of delegating future homework assignments to this magical chatbot. The digerati have already declared it the next big thing. Venture capitalists expect billion-dollar companies will be built on this technology.

ChatGPT, from OpenAI, is simple: Type in a request, get back a human-like response. Example: “Write a 500-word essay detailing the origins of the Spanish language, its ties to Latin roots, and the pervasiveness today.” Or “Write a warm, humorous 150-word email asking for 30 minutes of the recipient’s time.”

When my students at Stanford Business School demonstrated the product in the classroom last week, I feared for my job. Writing emails and memos is what I teach.

I found the AI-generated work amazing—then breathed a sigh of relief. These early attempts at AI, at best, automate mediocrity. And sometimes they get it wrong entirely.

My former student Matt Gibstein, now founder of an investment firm backing consumer technology start-ups, asked the chatbot to “Write an email to Glenn Kramon, a lecturer at Stanford and newspaper editor, in a tone that is persuasive and likely to make Glenn inclined to take a brief phone call. Please reference a specific article he has written and say how much I enjoyed it.”

I laughed when I read the result. The email began, “I hope this email finds you well.” As my 2,000 former students will tell you, never start an email that way. Beginning with “hope you are well” makes you one of a million; you want to be one in a million.

The email continues: “I am a huge fan of your work”—also a sycophantic cliche—and mentions my “article on the rise of automation and its impact on the workforce,” calling it “incredibly thought provoking and well-written.” I have written no such article (although I did oversee a project on this subject seven years ago).

It continues: “I am reaching out because I am currently working on a project ....” (My students would snicker; unnecessary adverbs—particularly “currently”—are my pet peeve.)

But mainly what automation has failed to master is warmth and individuality, which are essential to persuading most people to answer you. Indeed, now that many software products are helping us write, a personal touch has never been more important to distinguish yourself.

Matt and I receive scores of emails a day and we can easily tell when one is impersonal, and written with a software assist.

This is not to say that ChatGPT (GPT stands for generative pre-trained transformer) isn’t pretty good at some things. It’s clear and grammatical. It’s organized and uses transitions.

Matt suggested we ask the chatbot to write this very article: “Write an 800-word opinion piece about what ChatGPT is, as well as its benefits and drawbacks.” In seconds it delivered a sensible, fair-minded description.

Among the benefits it mentions: “its ability to generate large amounts of text quickly and efficiently. Unlike a human writer, who may struggle to come up with ideas or struggle with writer’s block, the ChatGPT can churn out pages of text in a matter of minutes.” It also praises “its ability to mimic the styles and patterns of different authors.”

By GLENN KRAMON
Los Angeles Times

Glenn Kramon is a lecturer on practical writing at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

Among the drawbacks: “It is not capable of understanding the meaning of the words it generates.” Another challenge is it “lacks the creativity and originality of a human writer …. This can make its output feel repetitive and uninspired.”

Fair enough.

No doubt ChatGPT and tools like it will become much more valuable and human-sounding—especially when these products ingest and learn from millions of emails and texts to create more personalized responses. In some future world, AI may be at the head of writers’ rooms, classrooms and law practices. Perhaps someday it may even write complicated code.

For now, if all you are aiming for is “just OK,” these tools will suffice. If you want to stand out and make a personal connection in your emails and essays, you’ll still need to write them yourself. No program can replicate your voice, quirks or wit.

My best advice to those ready to cede to the computer: Don’t outsource your writing to an AI overlord. At least, not yet.

UKRAINE

From Page 8

tary assistance to Ukraine. Yet the longer the war continues, the more likely it is that the United States will press for equitable burden-sharing.

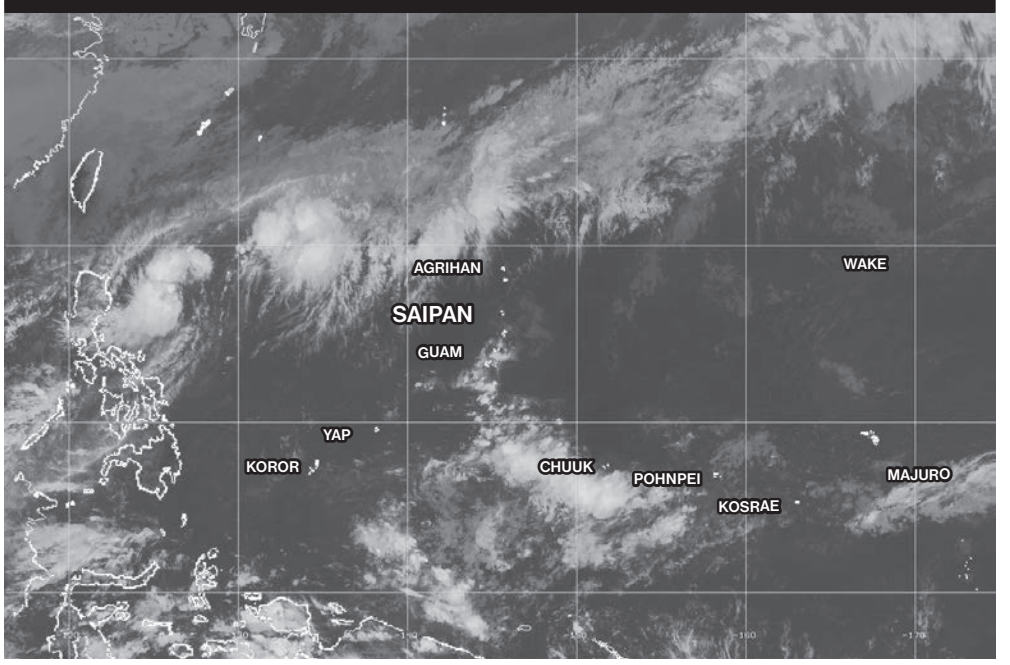
Left to fester, the inequity in burden-sharing could create rancor. It should be fixed before things reach that point. The best way forward is a division of labor: The U.S. takes primary responsibility for military assistance to Ukraine; Europe and the U.K. do the same for economic aid.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Mostly sunny	Isolated showers. Mostly sunny
83° 78°	88° 76°	88° 77°	87° 78°	85° 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 1:30 PM, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Doppler Radar has shown a slight uptick in showers across the Marianas this morning, so the forecast was updated to increase showers from isolated to scattered. Showers are expected to decrease in the afternoon.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Isolated Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Palau	Partly Cloudy	84° / 76°
Yap	Isolated Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	87° / 78°
Kosrae	Scattered Thunderstorms	86° / 79°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	70° / 63°
Beijing	Sunny	41° / 21°
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	66° / 55°
Honolulu	Mostly Cloudy	81° / 71°
London	Rain/Snow	36° / 27°
Los Angeles	Rain	58° / 44°
Manila	Thunderstorms	87° / 76°
Melbourne	Showers	62° / 51°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80° / 65°
New York	Rain	43° / 36°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	56° / 47°
Paris	Partly Cloudy	35° / 28°
Busan	Showers	57° / 41°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	57° / 45°
Salem	Rain	62° / 52°
San Francisco	Rain	53° / 43°
Seoul	Light Rain	43° / 31°
Tokyo	Sunny	52° / 42°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	49° / 36°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:33 AM	5:47 PM
Tuesday	6:33 AM	5:48 PM
Wednesday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Thursday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Friday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:22 AM	8:42 PM
Tuesday	-	10:14 AM	9:34 PM
Wednesday	-	11:03 AM	10:26 PM
Thursday	-	11:48 AM	11:18 PM
Friday	-	12:30 PM	-

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
3:58 AM	Low Tide	0.40
11:34 AM	High Tide	1.58
4:54 PM	Low Tide	1.16
8:54 PM	High Tide	1.45

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

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SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

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E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:00AM	7:45AM	Daily
UA193	7:55PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	8:00PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA117/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau
OZ624/701	3:40PM	10:35AM+1	3,6 via Incheon

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

OZ624	3:40PM	7:40PM	3, 6
TW308	4:30PM	8:20PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	3, 7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:46AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	12:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	12:40AM	8:46AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:46AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:46AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
OZ704/623	11:50PM	2:40PM+1	2, 5 via Incheon

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

OZ623	9:00AM	2:40PM	3, 6
TW307	10:00AM	3:30PM	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	3, 7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

MARIANAS SOUTHERN AIRWAYS

INITIAL DAILY FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF AUGUST 18, 2022

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:00 A.M.	7:15 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
9:50 A.M.	10:05 A.M.	
4:00 P.M.	4:15 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
7:35 A.M.	7:50 A.M.	(Except Sundays)
10:25 A.M.	10:40 A.M.	
4:35 P.M.	4:50 P.M.	(Except Saturdays)

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
8:10 A.M.	8:40 A.M.	
1:45 P.M.	2:15 P.M.	

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
9:00 A.M.	9:30 A.M.	
2:35 P.M.	3:05 P.M.	

SAIPAN TO GUAM

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
11:10 A.M.	12:00 P.M.	
5:15 P.M.	6:05 P.M.	

GUAM TO SAIPAN

DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
12:30 P.M.	1:20 P.M.	
6:40 P.M.	7:30 P.M.	

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JUNE 1, 2022

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30	9:00	Daily
1302	11:00	11:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
1302	12:00	12:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
1303	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	13:00	13:30	Tues/Thurs/ Sat/Sun
3102	14:00	14:30	Mon/Wed/Fri
3103	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

LIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	12:00	12:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Mon/Wed/Fri

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Saipan Shoes Christmas sale; new store hours ongoing

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Saipan Shoes will be having a Christmas sale and new store hours starting this week.

Owner Lydia Li said starting today, Dec. 12, until the end of the holiday season in early January, the Gualo Rai shoe store will be having up to 50% off on their over 1,000 selection of shoes and other items.

To make it more convenient for Christmas shoppers, Saipan Shoes also extended its store hours from 11am-7pm to 10am-8pm.

Li said despite the island still feeling the effects of COVID-19, business has been good for Saipan Shoes since opening last February.

Saipan Shoes started when Li's bestfriend needed shoes for her daughter's last-minute school activity.

"She cannot find the right size and the right design on island. Because of this her daughter told her, 'I don't want to go. I don't want to go anymore.'"

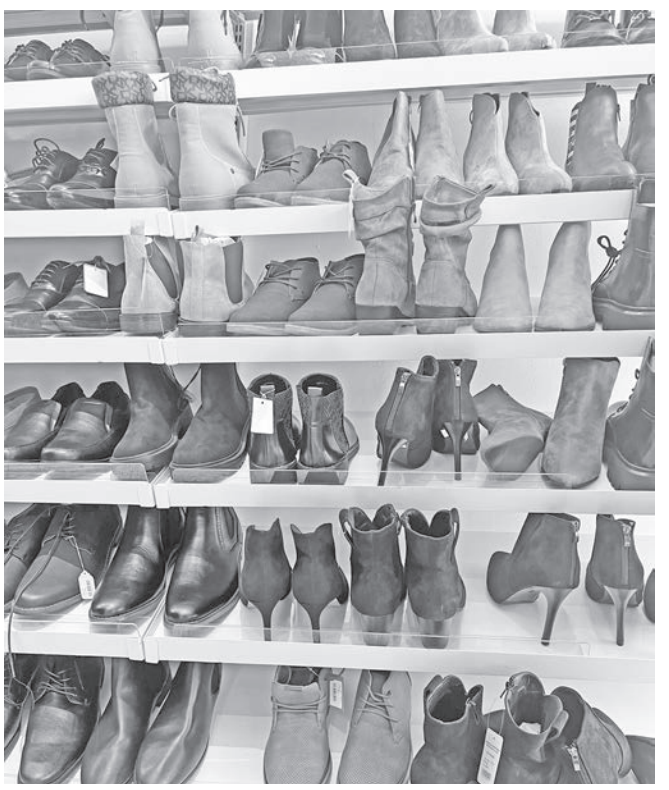
This became a light-bulb moment for Li as she suddenly thought of opening her own shoe store, especially in the wake of Payless Shoesource closing its business in the CNMI.

She added that while there are some people who buy shoes online even before Payless Shoesource went out of business, buying shoes face-to-face is still a better experience than ordering online.

"Sometimes, the shoes are too narrow and the sizes are too big or small. It also takes awhile to get the right shoe when you ship it back. So, having a shoe store on island is really convenient for the community," said Li.

MARK RABAGO

Saipan Shoes is located in the building where Life in Son Fellowship is located at the corner of Middle Road and Gualo Rain Road in Gualo Rai.



MARK RABAGO

Saipan Shoes carries a gamut of men's and women's shoe styles ranging from dress shoes, safety shoes, running shoes, sports shoes, hiking shoes, and sandals.

Opening a shoe store also came at an opportune time for Li, as the COVID-19 pandemic essentially shuttered down her bed-and-breakfast business due to the lack of tourists.

Saipan Shoes carries a gamut of men's and women's shoe styles ranging from dress shoes, safety shoes, running shoes, sports shoes, hiking shoes, and sandals. They also have children's shoes to boot.

While what they carry are mostly generic brands from China, Li said they also have the occasional U.S. brand shoes they've bought from sales in the mainland.

"They're very affordable, comfortable, and sturdy shoes that come in all sizes as well as wide and narrow. We have a lot of return customers who can attest to the quality of our shoes."

Li said a common anecdote of customers at Saipan Shoes is how the store has saved them from a desperate situation like her best friend's experience.

"The other day we had a customer who got invited to Korea for a wedding. He was looking for formal shoes and found one at one of the stores on Saipan but it cost over $100. He didn't buy those shoes because he said he will only be using them one time. Good thing he stopped by our store and bought an affordable but stylish pair of formal shoes."

Asked what shoes are their bestsellers, Li readily said it's their rubber shoes.

"Because we carry big sizes up to 14 and wide sizes—for both men and women. And anyone can have them for as low as $15 because they're currently 50% off."

She added that their formal shoes have also been a hit, as "they are made in China but the design is from Europe."

Aside from shoes, Saipan Shoes also sells socks, fashion jewelry, hip bags, baby clothes, shirts for families, and trinkets or small items that are handy stocking stuffers or exchange gift ideas this holiday season.

Li also gave kudos to the government for issuing out stimulus cards that helped small businesses like hers cope with the economic slowdown brought about by the pandemic.

"This year we have the stimulus card so I really appreciate the government because that stimulus card helped our business a lot."

On how Saipan Store has maintained its affordable prices, Li said her philosophy has always been to try and sell more despite getting low profits.

"I didn't really make a price hike despite the rising cost of doing business. I want the price lower and sell a lot and just keep a little bit of profit."

Saipan Shoes is located in the building where Life in Son Fellowship is located at the corner of Middle Road and Gualo Rain Road in Gualo Rai. For more information, call (670) 783-7388.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Twitter relaunching subscriber service after debacle

NEW YORK (AP) — Twitter is once again attempting to launch its premium service, a month after a previous attempt failed.

The social media company said Saturday it would let users buy subscriptions to Twitter Blue to get a blue checkmark and access special features starting Monday.

The blue checkmark was originally given to companies, celebrities, government entities and journalists verified by the platform. After Elon Musk bought Twitter for $44 billion in October, he launched a service granting blue checks to anyone willing to pay $8 a month. But it was inundated by imposter accounts, including those impersonating Musk's businesses Tesla and SpaceX, so Twitter suspended the service days after its launch.

The relaunched service will cost $8 a month for web users and $11 a month for iPhone users. Twitter says subscribers will see fewer ads, be able to post longer videos and have their tweets featured more prominently.

Hong Kong jails pro-democracy media tycoon over fraud

HONG KONG (AP)—A Hong Kong court sentenced a pro-democracy media tycoon to five years and nine months in prison on Saturday over two fraud charges linked to lease violations, the latest of a series of cases against prominent activists that critics say are aimed at crushing dissent in the city.

Jimmy Lai, who was arrested during a crackdown on the city's pro-democracy movement following widespread protests in 2019 and under the National Security Law imposed by Beijing, was also fined 2 million Hong Kong dollars ($257,000).

His media company, Next Digital, published the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily. The publication was forced to close following the arrests of its top executives, editors and journalists last year.

In October, Lai was found guilty of fraud for subletting part of the office space to a secretarial firm, which was also controlled by him, between 2016 and 2020. The second fraud count was for letting the same firm use the media outlet's office space in an alleged breach of lease agreements from 1998 to 2015.

The court at that time ruled the moves had violated lease agreements with the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corp. and that Lai had hidden the fact that the company was occupying space in the building.

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Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) are hereby giving notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on ***Wednesday, December 14, 2022, at 8 a.m.*** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Administration Building, Governor's Conference Room on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (10/26/2022)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson's Report
- Re-nomination and Confirmation Hearing for Dr. Angelica Sabino
- Compliance with the full licensure requirements
- Issues on Healthcare Providers Practicing without a License

VII. Director's Report
- 2022 Citizen Centric Report
- Financial Report
- Notification on the Proposed Amendments for Psychology & Physicians
- Update on the Energov Program

VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
A. Governor's Office
- Re-nomination Letter for Dr. Angelica Sabino

B. Legislature
- Confirmation Hearing for Dr. Angelica Sabino

X. Old Business
XI. New Business
- Proposed Dental Therapist Practice Agreement

XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
A. New Application
B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
XV. Announcements
A. Next Meeting Date
B. Adjournment of Meeting

THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
BAR ASSOCIATION

Employment Opportunity

Executive Director

The CNMI Bar Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the highest standards for the legal profession in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The candidate for the position of Executive Director must be a self-starter who independently meets the daily goals and objectives of the Bar. The candidate must be very detail oriented, trustworthy, reliable, and must have excellent customer-service skills. The ideal candidate must have at least five (5) years of administrative experience; an associate's degree or a business college certificate of proficiency; and proficient computer (MS Office, MS Excel, and Adobe Acrobat), accounting, bookkeeping, and English-language skills.

Duties include overall office operations, such as maintaining financial accounts; dues collection; expense payments; coordination of meetings, programs, and projects; representation of the Bar at functions; and any other duties and responsibilities as assigned by the Bar President.

Salary: $17,680.00 (part-time for one year).
Application Procedure: Send resume, cover letter, and three references via email to cnmibar@gmail.com.
Application Deadline: Friday, December 16, 2022

Nation

Griner swap reveals dilemma US faces in freeing detainees

WASHINGTON (AP)—A Taliban drug lord convicted in a vast heroin trafficking conspiracy. A Russian pilot imprisoned for a scheme to distribute cocaine across the world. And a Russian arms dealer so infamous that he earned the nickname "Merchant of Death."

Those are just some of the convicted felons the United States government has agreed to release in the last year in exchange for securing the release of Americans detained abroad. It's long been conventional wisdom that the U.S. risks incentivizing additional hostage taking by negotiating with adversarial nations and militant groups for the release of American citizens. But the succession of swaps has made clear the Biden administration's willingness to free a convicted criminal once seen as a threat to society if that's what it takes to bring home a U.S. citizen.

The latest swap occurred Thursday when WNBA star Brittney Griner, a two-time Olympic gold medalist who played pro basketball in Russia and was easily the most prominent American to be held overseas, was freed in exchange for Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout.

The exchange drew some criticism, including from Republican lawmakers, and raised concerns that Bout, who was tried and convicted in American courts, was being traded for someone the U.S regarded as a wrongful detainee convicted in Russia of a relatively minor offense. Administration officials acknowledged that such deals carry a heavy price and cautioned against the perception that they are the new norm, but the reality is that they've been a tool of administrations of both political parties.

The Trump administration, seen as more willing to flout convention in hostage affairs, brought home Navy veteran Michael White in 2020 in an agreement that freed an Iranian American doctor and permitted him to return to Iran.

AP

In this image made from video provided by Russian Federal Security Service, WNBA star and two-time Olympic gold medalist Brittney Griner sits in the plane as she flies to Abu Dhabi to be exchanged for Russian citizen Viktor Bout, in Russia, Friday, Dec. 9, 2022.

The Obama administration pardoned or dropped charges against seven Iranians in a prisoner exchange tied to the nuclear deal with Tehran. Three jailed Cubans were sent home in 2014 as Havana released American Alan Gross after five years' imprisonment.

Jon Franks, who's long advised families of American hostages and detainees, said it's not true that the U.S. can just throw its might around and get people released.

"The maximum pressure mantra just doesn't work — and, by the way, I don't think prisoner trades undercut maximum pressure," said Franks, the spokesman for the Bring Our Families Home Campaign.

Griner was arrested at a Moscow airport in February after customs agents said she was carrying vape canisters with cannabis oil. Bout, who was arrested in 2008, was sentenced in 2012 to 25 years in prison on charges that he conspired to sell tens of millions of dollars in weapons that U.S officials said were to be used against Americans.

The trade highlights a trend in recent years of Americans being detained abroad and held hostage not by terrorist groups but by countries looking to gain leverage over America, said Dani Gilbert, a fellow in U.S. foreign policy and international security at Dartmouth College.

Gilbert said the idea that the U.S. doesn't negotiate for hostages is a "misnomer." She said that really only applies when an American is being held by a U.S.-designated terrorist organization, but otherwise the U.S. has historically done whatever is necessary to bring Americans home.

What is different, she said, is over roughly the last decade there's been a trend of foreign governments as opposed to terrorist groups detaining Americans abroad, often on trumped-up charges. She noted that in July the U.S. introduced a new risk indicator on its travel advisories — a "D" — for countries that tend to wrongfully detain people.

Kari Lake challenges her defeat in Arizona governor's race

PHOENIX (AP)—Kari Lake, the Republican defeated in Arizona governor's race, is formally challenging her loss to Democrat Katie Hobbs, asking a court to throw out certified election results from the state's most populous county and either declare her the winner or rerun the governor's election in that county.

The lawsuit filed late Friday by Lake centers on long lines and other difficulties that people experienced while voting on Election Day in Maricopa County. The challenge filed in Maricopa County Superior Court also alleges hundreds of thousands of ballots were illegally cast, but there's no evidence that's true.

Lake has refused to acknowledge that she lost to Hobbs by more than 17,000 votes.

The Donald Trump-endorsed gubernatorial candidate has bombarded Maricopa County with complaints, largely related to a problem with printers at some vote centers that led to ballots being printed with markings that were too light to be read by the on-site tabulators.

Lines backed up in some polling places, fueling Republican suspicions that some supporters were unable to cast a ballot, though there's no evidence it affected the outcome. County officials say everyone was able to vote and all legal ballots were counted.

Lake sued Maricopa County officials and Hobbs in her current role as Arizona's secretary of state.

AP

In this combination of photos Arizona gubernatorial candidates, Republican Kari Lake, left, appears before a PBS televised debate on June 29, 2022, in Phoenix and Democrat Katie Hobbs smiles prior to a televised interview in Phoenix, Oct. 18, 2022.

Sophia Solis, a spokesperson for the secretary of state's office, said Lake's lawsuit was being reviewed but had no other comment on the filing.

Jason Berry, a Maricopa County spokesperson, declined to comment on Lake's request to throw out the county's election results in the governor's race. But he said the county "respects the election contest process and looks forward to sharing facts about the administration of the 2022 general election and our work to ensure every legal voter had an opportunity to cast their ballot."

Hobbs in a post on her Twitter account called the lawsuit "Lake's latest desperate attempt to undermine our democracy and throw out the will of the voters." She posted a statement from her campaign manager that called the lawsuit a "sham" and said her camp remained focused on "getting ready to hit the ground running on Day One of Katie Hobbs' administration."

Lake's lawsuit says Republicans were disproportionately affected by the problems in Maricopa County because they outvoted Democrats on Election Day 3-1. GOP leaders had urged their voters to wait until Election Day to vote.

In late November, Lake filed a public records lawsuit demanding Maricopa County hand over documents related to the election. She was seeking to identify voters who may have had trouble casting a ballot, such as people who checked in at more than one vote center or those who returned a mail ballot and also checked in at a polling place.

ACROSS THE NATION

Scientists lower alert for Mauna Loa, say eruption could end

HONOLULU (AP)—Scientists lowered the alert level for the Mauna Loa volcano on Hawaii's Big Island from a warning to a watch on Saturday and said the mountain's first eruption in nearly 40 years may soon end.

The U.S. Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said in a bulletin that the eruption on the mountain's northeast rift zone was continuing, but lava output and volcanic gas emissions were "greatly reduced."

"High eruption rates will not resume based on past eruptive behavior and current behavior suggests that the eruption may end soon," the observatory said. "However, an inflationary trend of Mauna Loa's summit is accompanying the decreased activity and there is a small possibility that the eruption could continue at very low eruptive rates."

Meanwhile, it said, a lava flow front had "stagnated" nearly 2 miles from Saddle Road, the vital highway that residents and tourists alike use to travel between the city of Hilo on the east side of the island and coastal resorts to the west.

Scientists said earlier this week that the road was no longer under imminent threat from the lava, allaying fears previously that it could be cut off.

Warnings on gay club shooter stir questions about old case

DENVER (AP)—A California woman who warned a judge last year about the danger posed by the suspect in the Colorado Springs gay nightclub shooting said Friday that the deaths could have been prevented if earlier charges against the suspect weren't dismissed.

Jeanie Streltzoff—a relative of alleged shooter Anderson Lee Aldrich—urged Colorado Judge Robin Chittum in a letter last November to incarcerate the suspect following a 2021 standoff with SWAT teams that uncovered a stockpile of more than 100 pounds (45 kilograms) of explosive material, firearms and ammunition.

Aldrich should have been in prison at the time of the shooting and prevented from obtaining weapons, she told The Associated Press on Friday.

"Five people died," Streltzoff said, hushing the final word. "Someone should have done something."

Ex-cop who kneeled on George Floyd's back gets 3.5-year term

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—The former Minneapolis police officer who kneeled on George Floyd's back while another officer kneeled on the Black man's neck was sentenced Friday to 3 1/2 years in prison.

J. Alexander Kueng pleaded guilty in October to a state count of aiding and abetting second-degree manslaughter. In exchange, a charge of aiding and abetting murder was dropped. Kueng is already serving a federal sentence for violating Floyd's civil rights, and the state and federal sentences will be served at the same time.

Kueng appeared at the hearing via video from a federal prison in Ohio. When given the chance to address the court, he declined.

With credit for time served and different parole guidelines in the state and federal systems, Kueng will likely serve a total of about 2 1/2 years behind bars.

Floyd's family members had the right to make victim impact statements, but none did. Family attorney Ben Crump, who has taken on some of the nation's most high-profile police killings of Black people, said in a statement before the hearing that Kueng's sentencing "delivers yet another piece of justice for the Floyd family."

Asia

Protesters decry alleged injustices under Marcos

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Hundreds of people marched in the Philippine capital on Saturday protesting what they said was a rising number of extrajudicial killings and other injustices under the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

The protesters, led by a Philippines-based rights group, gathered at a public square in Manila before marching toward the presidential palace to demand justice for victims. Police estimated around 800 protesters took part in the rally, which coincided with International Human Rights Day.

Cristina Palabay of the rights group Karapatan said under the Marcos administration's counterinsurgency campaign, the group has documented at least 17 cases of extrajudicial killings in addition to four other incidents of violence where victims survived.

The number of political prisoners continues to rise, with 828 detained as of Nov. 30, Palabay said, noting that at least 25 of them were arrested after Marcos took office in June.

"Despite these sordid figures there has been zero justice for the victims of extrajudicial killings," Palabay said in a statement. "The culture of impunity continues to rear its ugly head."

Organizers said protesters in Manila and other parts of the country included families of activists who disappeared or were tortured during the administration of Marcos' father and namesake, ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos, as well as human rights victims under former President Rodrigo Duterte, whose brutal war on drugs is under investigation by the International Criminal Court after leaving thousands dead.

AP

A protester kicks an effigy of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during a rally as they commemorate International Human Rights Day, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022, in Manila, Philippines.

The dictator was ousted in an army-backed "People Power" revolt in 1986 and died three years later in exile in the U.S. without admitting any wrongdoing, including accusations that he, his family and other associates amassed an estimated $5 billion to $10 billion while he was in power.

"We come together as families of victims from different regimes and presidents ... We have made it a point that every International Human Rights Day we call for justice, and commit to not allow the same violations to happen to others," said Evangeline Hernandez, chairperson of a human rights victims group.

Karapatan said the current administration is also increasing the use of anti-terror laws to suppress dissent and curtailing freedom of expression and association.

The U.N. Human Rights Council has urged the Marcos administration to address the killings and other rights abuses.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Facing COVID surge, China expanding hospitals, ICUs

BEIJING (AP)—Facing a surge in COVID-19 cases, China is setting up more intensive care facilities and trying to strengthen hospitals as Beijing rolls back anti-virus controls that confined millions of people to their homes, crushed economic growth and set off protests.

President Xi Jinping's government is officially committed to stopping virus transmission, the last major country to try. But the latest moves suggest the ruling Communist Party will tolerate more cases without quarantines or shutting down travel or businesses as it winds down its "zero-COVID" strategy.

A Cabinet meeting called Thursday for "full mobilization" of hospitals including adding staff to ensure their "combat effectiveness" and increasing drug supplies, according to state media. Officials were told to keep track of the health of everyone in their area aged 65 and older.

It isn't clear how much infection numbers have increased since Beijing last week ended mandatory testing as often as once a day in many areas. But interviews and social media accounts say there are outbreaks in businesses and schools across the country. Some restaurants and other businesses have closed because too many employees are sick.

New Japan law aims at Unification Church fundraising abuses

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's parliament on Saturday enacted a law to restrict malicious donation solicitations by religious and other groups, which mainly targets the Unification Church, whose fundraising tactics and cozy ties with the governing party caused public outrage.

The South Korean-based religious group's decades-long ties with Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party surfaced after the July assassination of former leader Shinzo Abe. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, whose support ratings tumbled, sought to calm public fury over his handling of the scandal and has replaced three Cabinet ministers — one over his church ties, another over a capital punishment gaffe and a third over political funding problems.

The new law, approved at this year's closing parliamentary session, allows believers, other donors and their families to seek the return of their money and prohibits religious groups and other organizations from soliciting funds by coercion, threats or linking donations to spiritual salvation.

World

Russia forces grinding on in eastern Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)—Russian forces have turned the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut into ruins, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, while Ukraine's military on Saturday reported missile, rocket and air strikes in multiple parts of the country that Moscow is trying to conquer after months of resistance.

» Bakhmut 'destroyed'

The latest battles of Russia's 9 1/2 month war in Ukraine have centered on four provinces that Russian President Vladimir Putin triumphantly — and illegally — claimed to have annexed in late September. The fighting indicates Russia's struggle to establish control of those regions and Ukraine's persistence to reclaim them.

Zelenskyy said the situation "remains very difficult" in several frontline cities in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Together, the provinces make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset and where Moscow-backed separatists have fought since 2014.

"Bakhmut, Soledar, Maryinka, Kreminna. For a long time, there is no living place left on the land of these areas that have not been damaged by shells and fire," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address, naming cities that have again found themselves in the crosshairs. "The occupiers actually destroyed Bakhmut, another Donbas city that the Russian army turned into burnt ruins."

Some buildings remain standing in Bakhmut, and the remaining residents still mill about the streets. But like Mariupol and other contested cities, it endured a long siege and spent weeks without water and power even before Moscow launched massive strikes to take out public utilities across Ukraine.

The Donetsk region's governor, Pavlo Kyrylenko, estimated seven weeks ago that 90% of the city's prewar population of over 70,000 had fled in the months since Moscow focused on seizing the entire Donbas.

The Ukrainian military General Staff reported missile attacks, about 20 airstrikes and more than 60 rocket attacks across Ukraine between Friday and Saturday. Spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun said the most active fighting was in the Bakhmut district, where more than 20 populated places came under fire. He said Ukrainian forces repelled Russian attacks in Donetsk and neighboring Luhansk.

Russia's grinding eastern offensive succeeded in capturing almost all of Luhansk during the summer. Donetsk eluded the same fate, and the Russian military in recent weeks has poured manpower and resources around Bakhmut in an attempt to encircle the city, analysts and Ukrainian officials have said.

After Ukrainian forces recaptured the southern city of Kherson nearly a month ago, the battle heated up around Bakhmut, demonstrating Putin's desire for visible gains following weeks of clear setbacks in Ukraine.

Taking Bakhmut would rupture Ukraine's supply lines and open a route for Russian forces to press on toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, key Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk. Russia has battered Bakhmut with rockets for more than half of the year. A ground assault accelerated after its troops forced the Ukrainians to withdraw from Luhansk in July.

But some analysts have questioned Russia's strategic logic in the relentless pursuit to take Bakhmut and surrounding areas that also came under intense shelling in the past weeks, and where Ukrainian officials reported that some residents were living in damp basements.

"The costs associated with six months of brutal, grinding, and attrition-based combat around #Bakhmut far outweigh any operational advantage that the #Russians can obtain from taking Bakhmut," the Institute for the Study of War, a think tank in Washington, posted on its Twitter feed on Thursday.

WORLD BRIEFS

Germany: Suspect dead after killing mother, taking hostages

BERLIN (AP)—German police said Saturday that a man suspected of killing his mother and later taking two people hostage in the eastern city of Dresden has died.

Authorities had urged people to avoid an area in the city center and ordered Dresden's Christmas market to remain closed while the police operation to free the hostages was underway.

Police initially said they were communicating with the suspect before announcing shortly after noon that the hostage situation was over.

"The suspect died during the operation," Dresden police later wrote on Twitter. "The 40-year-old suffered fatal injuries while ... the hostages were freed."

Dresden police didn't immediately respond to requests for confirmation about whether the man had been killed by police or died from self-inflicted injuries.

Police also said the hostages were "outwardly uninjured."

France to make condoms free for anyone under 25, Macron says

PARIS (AP)—France will make condoms free in pharmacies for anyone up to age 25 in the new year, President Emmanuel Macron announced Friday.

The move comes as the government says sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise among young people, and as this year's exceptional inflation is cutting especially deeply into the budgets of France's poorest.

Girls and women 25 and under already can get free birth control in France as part of government efforts to ensure that young people of all incomes can prevent unwanted pregnancy. Existing measures don't apply to men, however, or specifically address access for transgender or nonbinary people.

Macron had said Thursday that condoms would be free in pharmacies for anyone 18-25 starting Jan. 1. But after a French TV presenter and others challenged him on social networks Friday over why the condom measure did not include minors, the president agreed to expand the program.

NO FILE

Life & Style

Celine Dion cancels shows because of stiff person syndrome

Celine Dion has put a halt on all performing after being diagnosed with a rare neurological disorder.

In an emotional video messages posted in French and English on Thursday on Instagram, Dion said stiff person syndrome was causing spasms that affect her ability to walk and sing.

"Unfortunately, the spasms affect every aspect of my daily life, sometimes causing difficulties when I walk and not allowing me to use my vocal cords to sing the way I'm used to," she said.

Dion said she had no choice but to postpone her "Courage" tour, which was to restart in February after several delays.

AP

Singer Celine Dion performs during her Courage tour in Quebec City on Sept. 18, 2019.

Her spring 2023 shows have been moved to 2024 and her summer 2023 concerts have been canceled.

"I miss seeing all of you, being on the stage, performing for you. I always give 100% when I do my shows, but my condition is not allowing me to give you that right now," she said.

Stiff person syndrome causes rigid muscles and painful muscle spasms, which can be triggered by such things as loud noises or light touch. The cause isn't known but it is thought to be an autoimmune disorder. Severe cases can cause difficulty walking and hunched posture.

Dion, who has five Grammy Awards and two Academy Awards, is the best-selling female artist of all time with hits like "I'm Alive" and "My Heart Will Go On." ***(AP)***

Harry and Meghan slam British tabloids in new Netflix series

LONDON (AP)—Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan, stick to a familiar script in a new Netflix series that chronicles the couple's estrangement from the royal family, chastising Britain's media and the societal racism they believe has fueled coverage of their relationship.

The first three episodes of "Harry and Meghan," released Thursday, dissect the symbiotic relationship between tabloid newspapers a nd the royal family and examine the history of racism across the British Empire, and how it persists.

The storytelling relies on interviews with the couple, their friends, and experts on race and the media. The series does not include dissenting voices, and there is no response from any of the media organizations mentioned.

"In this family sometimes, you know, you're part of the problem rather than part of the solution," Harry says in one of the episodes. "There is a huge level of unconscious bias. The thing with unconscious bias is that it is actually no one's fault. But once it has been pointed out, or identified within yourself, you then need to make it right."

The media's treatment of Meghan—and what the couple felt was a lack of sympathy from royal institutions about the coverage—were at the heart of their complaints when they walked away from royal life almost three years ago and moved to Southern California. Lucrative contracts with Netflix and Spotify have helped bankroll their new life in the wealthy enclave of Montecito.

K-pop star among 8 to join Japan tycoon Maezawa's moon trip

TOKYO (AP)—Japanese billionaire Yusaku Maezawa said Friday that K-pop star T.O.P will be among eight people who will join him on a flight around the moon on a SpaceX spaceship in the coming years.

The Japanese tycoon launched plans for the lunar voyage in 2018, buying all the seats on the spaceship. He began taking applications from around the world in March 2021 for what will be his second space journey after his 12-day trip to the International Space Station on the Soyuz Russian spaceship last year.

Maezawa has said the moon trip is aimed for 2023, but most space observers consider the target overly optimistic given that the SpaceX Starship has yet to be launched with its Super Heavy booster or orbit the Earth.

The eight people Maezawa selected for his "dearMoon project" from 1 million applicants are T.O.P, who debuted as a lead rapper for the K-Pop group Big Bang; American DJ Steve Aoki; filmmaker Brendan Hall and YouTuber Tim Dodd, also of the United States. The other four are British photographer Karim Illiya, Indian actor Dev Joshi, Czech artist Yemi AD and Irish photographer Rhiannon Adam. American Olympic snowboarder Kaitlyn Farrington and Japanese dancer Miyu were chosen as backups.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

S Jerrod Carmichael to host Golden Globes as it returns to NBC

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Comedian Jerrod Carmichael will host next month's Golden Globe Awards, presiding over a boozy celebration of TV and film that is trying to make a comeback after being knocked off the air by scandal. Carmichael, who won an Emmy this year for his intimate HBO special "Rothaniel," will be the rare Black emcee for a ceremony that has been criticized for years for snubbing Black-led projects and performances. Thursday's announcement comes roughly a month before the Jan. 12 ceremony at the Beverly Hilton.

NBC refused to air the 2022 ceremony to allow the Globes and their parent organization, the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, to make changes after a damaging 2021 Los Angeles Times investigation revealed its inner workings, including that it had no Black members since at least 2002.

Kristen Stewart to lead 73rd Berlinale film festival jury

BERLIN (AP)—Organizers of the annual Berlin film festival said Friday that Kristen Stewart will head the international jury in 2023. The American actor, screenwriter and director, who starred in the "Twilight" series and recently played Princess Diana in "Spencer," for which she received an Oscar nomination, will lead the judges' panel at the 73rd Berlinale. "She's one of the most talented and multi-faceted actors of her generation," festival directors Mariette Rissenbeek and Carlo Chatrian said in a statement, adding that "with an impressive body of work behind her, Kristen Stewart is the perfect bridge between U.S. and Europe." Stewart made her directorial and screenwriting debut in 2017, and was a member of the international jury at the Cannes Film Festival the following year.The Berlin International Film Festival takes place from Feb. 16-26.

Jury goes a week with no verdict at Weinstein rape trial

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jurors at the Los Angeles rape and sexual misconduct trial of Harvey Weinstein have been deliberating for a week without reaching a verdict. The jury of eight men and four women went home Friday afternoon and will return to resume deliberations on Monday morning. They must decide on two counts of rape and five other sexual assault counts against the 70-year-old former movie magnate. The jurors have had no questions for the court that might provide insight into the status of their work. They got the case at the end of closing arguments on Dec. 2. They have been deliberating for 5 1/2 days, or about 24 hours total.

Widowed mom's nonstop calls wearing down her only child

DEAR ABBY: I am an only child and I love my mother. My father passed away after a short illness three years ago, leaving my mother a widow. My problem is, she calls me multiple times a day. I'm not one of those women whose mom is my best friend or someone who enjoys talking on the phone. If I don't answer, she keeps calling back. She calls while I'm getting ready for work, on the way to work, while I'm at work or on the way home, etc.

I know I may regret it one day, but I don't have the energy for all her daily calls, which are basically her asking me 50 questions. I don't talk to my own grown children on a daily basis like she calls me. I have reached the point that I dread it and at times ignore her calls.

I have encouraged her to branch out—hang out with other widows, meet new friends or join groups, but because of COVID she's hesitant. I don't want to be ugly to her, but the more she does this, the more anxious I get. I have also asked her to just text me so I can respond when I'm available, but she says she just doesn't think about that as an option.

She's a very sweet woman, but she is stressing me out! Is it me or her? Please help me so I don't ruin this relationship. As an only child, am I being selfish?

INUNDATED IN THE SOUTH

DEAR INUNDATED: It isn't you, it's her. Your mother is doing this because she feels lonely, anxious and vulnerable and may have forgotten how to socialize as an individual without your father. The COVID restrictions added to the problem because people were discouraged from hanging out in groups.

After three years, it is not selfish to create boundaries with her. Tell her you will speak to her once a day. Then screen your calls and talk with your mom when you aren't stressed and have a few minutes to spend in conversation.

■■■■

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have visits from family several times a year. I don't cook, at least not a lot—just simple meals for my husband and me. We are 72 and 69. Visiting family members want to cook and discuss the latest natural foods they have grown or used, and I'm left feeling like they expect the same from me. (We do occasionally take people to a nearby restaurant.)

It feels to me more like a "look what I'm doing" than casual conversation. Cooking, growing, etc. don't impress me because I have been there, moved on and am no longer interested in the achievement. How do I deal with these people?

BEYOND IT IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR BEYOND IT: You are under no obligation to alter the way you cook to suit these visitors. When your relatives start cooking and "lecturing" about nutrition and gardening, consider changing the subject. Or, pop in some earbuds and listen to your favorite podcast or music. You may find that once they realize they have lost their audience, they'll find something else to talk about.

■■■■

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

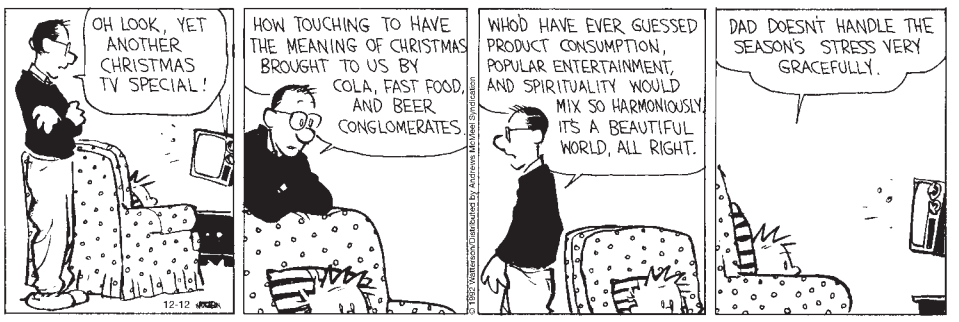
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


OH LOOK, YET ANOTHER CHRISTMAS TV SPECIAL!
HOW TOUCHING TO HAVE THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS BROUGHT TO US BY COLA, FAST FOOD, AND BEER CONGLOMERATES.
WHOD HAVE EVER GUESSED PRODUCT CONSUMPTION, POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT, AND SPIRITUALITY WOULD MIX SO HARMONIOUSLY. IT'S A BEAUTIFUL WORLD, ALL RIGHT.
DAD DOESN'T HANDLE THE SEASON'S STRESS VERY GRACEFULLY.
12-12
© 1992 Watterson/Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

I'VE GOT A GOOD HOME, GOOD FOOD AND GOOD FRIENDS
WHAT MORE COULD I WANT?
WELL, SINCE YOU ASKED...
CHRISTMAS LIST
JIM DAVIS 12-12
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Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

HERE'S YOUR SPEEDING TICKET. I SUGGEST YOU READ IT VERY CAREFULLY.
JUST SEND IT TO MY LAWYER.
WHO'S YOUR LAWYER?
THE GUY I WAS JUST DRAG RACING.
12-12
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Lustrous black
4 Brazilian dance
9 Gal. fractions
12 Satisfied sigh
13 Mojito needs
14 Eg. and Syr., once
15 "The Freshman" actor Matthew
17 Equi-
18 Roulette bet
19 Special skills
21 Place for a massage
24 Egg part
25 Sony rival
26 Sault — Marie
28 Lukewarm
31 Messes up
33 Catchall abbr.
35 Faction
36 Beckett's no-show
38 Use a straw
40 Cartoon frame
41 Ride the waves
43 Din
45 Meal with a crust
47 — -Magnon
48 Tours pal
49 Area of expertise
54 Lobbying gp.
55 — Park, Colorado
56 Geese formation
57 Biblical boat
58 Hide
59 Tofu source

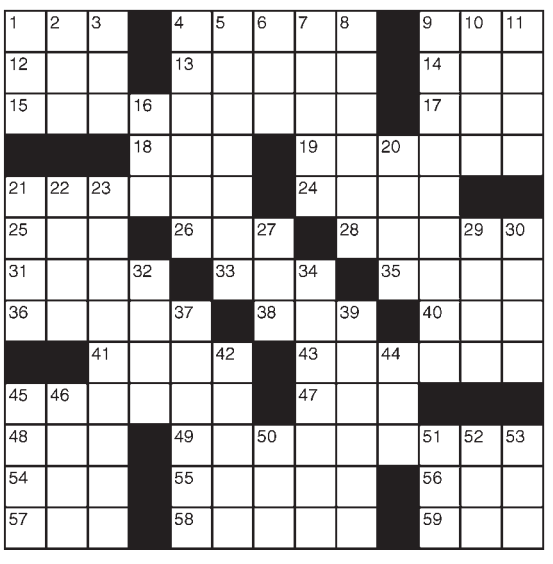
DOWN

1 Poke
2 Jug handle
3 Nevertheless, briefly
4 Dozes
5 Broadcast time
6 2001, to Cato
7 Tom Sawyer's love
8 Start of a JFK quote
9 Lottery ticket type
10 Chore
11 "No seats" signs
16 Hosp. workers
20 Pub orders
21 Bottom-of-the-barrel bit
22 Height (Pref.)
23 Measuring device
27 UFO fliers
29 Paris notion
30 Shoulder muscle, for short
32 Gumbo or bisque, e.g.
34 Social groups
37 "Survivor" teams
39 Diocese part
42 Banquet
44 Farm grazer
45 Dad
46 Actor Epps
50 Call — day
51 ICU hookups
52 Corp. boss
53 Lock opener

Solution time: 26 mins.

D	S	L	■	R	A	T	■	O	N	E	A	M
O	L	A	■	U	V	A	■	W	I	L	M	A
W	A	N	■	D	O	U	B	L	E	D	I	P
E	T	A	■	Y	I	P	E	S	■	■	■	■
L	E	I	S	■	D	E	N	■	K	A	L	E
■	■	■	W	A	S	■	D	A	N	U	B	E
E	M	C	E	E	■	■	■	L	O	G	O	N
S	A	H	A	R	A	■	D	E	W	■	■	■
S	T	E	T	■	C	L	E	■	N	O	N	E
■	■	■	A	M	A	T	I	■	F	A	R	■
T	R	I	P	L	E	S	E	C	■	T	A	R
K	O	R	E	A	■	T	S	K	■	E	C	O
T	E	E	N	S	■	S	T	Y	■	N	P	R

Last Friday's Answer 12/12



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mayim Bialik, 47; Madchen Amick, 52; Regina Hall, 52; Jennifer Connelly, 52.

Happy Birthday: Be honest with yourself and those you love. Put together a realistic plan that will help you put your energy into life improvements. Changing how you look at your earning potential and use your skills to secure a steady income will pay off. Forge closer connections to those who have something to contribute to your progress. Leave nothing to chance. Your numbers are 2, 8, 20, 27, 31, 39, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Pick people and projects with care. Be prepared to move forward alone, and you'll quickly discover who has a vested interest in what you are doing and who has something to offer. Don't take a risk that can end in injury. ✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Show discipline regarding emotional matters and cash flow. Underspend and listen more than you speak. Don't make impossible promises. Stick to a routine that you know you can afford. Kindness will be appreciated and will ward off negativity. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Truth and accuracy matter, regardless of your actions. Discipline, proper preparation and seeing promises through from beginning to end will lead to success. Put your energy where it counts, and you won't be disappointed. Avoid unnecessary changes and impulsive actions. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Impulse purchases will fall short of your expectations. Be creative, think outside the box and develop cost-efficient ideas and plans. Don't overdo it. Overindulgence will leave you with a mess to clean up. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Emotions will surface. Before you air your grievances, try to fix the problem without asking for help. Do your best to assist others and be fun to be around, and you'll win favors and admirers. Love is on the rise. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Keep a low profile and change only what's necessary. Stick close to home and share with the people you trust and love. Don't leave unfinished business in other people's hands. Kindness and consideration will get you further than complaints and criticism. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Keep moving. The less time and energy you give to discussing sensitive issues, the better. Travel about, do your research and focus on self-improvement, not on trying to change others. Your best breaks will come from what you complete, not from what you talk about doing.✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Take the most straightforward route and change what's necessary. Pay attention to detail when you try something new. Refuse to let emotions interfere with picking up the knowledge you need to get ahead. Keep money matters and plans simple and within reason. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Hard work will pay off. Keep your eye on what's important, and you'll discover the best way to reach your goal without facing emotional setbacks. Don't expect everyone to agree with you or help you. Put your energy where it counts. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Get approval before you change something at home or plan something with someone close. If you act in haste, you'll face opposition. Search for a unique way to use your skills and qualifications, and something interesting will come to your attention. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Don't be so hard on yourself. Head toward the place you want to spend your time. Whether staying at home or venturing out with someone special, put your peace of mind first and enjoy what life offers. Take responsibility for your happiness. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Don't mix emotions and money, or it will cost you dearly. Don't give in to anyone trying to push you in a direction you don't care to go. Don't overspend to try to win favors or buy someone's love. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are determined, engaging and intelligent. You are persistent and steadfast.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

7			9		1	6		5
		3	4			2		
8	1			6			3	
1							2	8
		7		2		9		
2	8							4
	4			9			6	1
		1			2	8		
3		8	7		6			2

Difficulty Level ★ 12/12

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Friday's Answer

7	4	8	3	6	1	2	9	5
3	6	5	8	2	9	4	7	1
2	1	9	4	7	5	6	3	8
4	8	1	7	5	2	9	6	3
6	9	7	1	8	3	5	4	2
5	3	2	6	9	4	1	8	7
8	5	3	2	4	6	7	1	9
9	7	4	5	1	8	3	2	6
1	2	6	9	3	7	8	5	4

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 12/09

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

IT'S FLEXUOUS **Solution: 6 letters**

R	I	P	P	L	E	H	T	W	I	S	T	E	S
O	I	W	A	I	S	T	E	E	R	T	S	L	P	T
U	S	D	D	T	W	G	D	L	O	F	R	I	O	R
N	C	C	G	I	S	N	A	K	E	A	N	T	R	E
D	S	R	N	E	U	E	P	E	V	R	U	C	S	T
N	E	Ⓔ	I	D	S	L	C	A	E	C	D	U	T	C
A	C	A	Ⓟ	M	A	A	F	N	P	L	I	D	I	H
B	A	S	A	Ⓐ	P	O	A	N	R	E	A	N	T	A
R	L	E	W	S	Ⓣ	E	R	I	A	H	R	A	C	N
E	E	P	U	L	L	A	W	I	R	E	B	P	H	G
B	O	U	N	C	Y	T	E	D	N	E	T	X	E	I
B	H	L	E	A	V	E	S	G	N	C	W	E	S	N
U	S	P	R	I	N	G	Y	D	D	P	O	O	L	G
R	I	T	N	E	M	E	V	O	M	E	N	I	L	S
P	A	T	T	E	R	N	E	L	B	I	X	E	L	F

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Last Friday's Answer: Years

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Warriors beat Celtics 123-107 in NBA Finals rematch

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Klay Thompson scored 34 points, Splash Brother Stephen Curry added 32 with six 3-pointers and Golden State beat the Boston Celtics 123-107 on Saturday night in a rematch of this year's NBA Finals won by the Warriors in six games.

Jordan Poole had 20 points starting in place of injured Andrew Wiggins despite shooting 1 for 9 from long range.

Thompson scored 12 of his points in the opening quarter shooting 5 of 9 and had 24 by halftime. Curry shot 12 for 21 and had seven assists and six rebounds playing 37 minutes.

Jaylen Brown had 31 points and nine rebounds, Jayson Tatum scored 18 points and Malcolm Brogdon added 16 off the bench for Boston, which had won eight of nine and three straight.

Brown scored five straight midway through the fourth with his 3-pointer at the 6:37 mark pulling the Celtics to 105-97. Grant Williams was ejected with 1:52 left.

Poole found Draymond Green for a transition dunk the next time down for the Warriors.

AP

Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry celebrates his 3-point basket against the Boston Celtics during the first half of an NBA basketball game in San Francisco, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022.

Nets 136, Pacers 133

In Indianapolis, Cam Thomas scored a career-high 33 points, Patty Mills added 24 and Brooklyn beat Indiana while resting its top seven scorers.

Brooklyn won its third straight and for the sixth time in seven games, playing without All-Stars Kevin Durant and Kyrie Irving and five more. And the Nets did it by outrebounding the Pacers 59-30 overall and 29-7 on the offensive end.

Tyrese Haliburton finished with 35 points, the most since he joined the Pacers in February, and nine assists.

The Nets had to sweat out Andrew Nembhard's 3 to force overtime at the buzzer before celebrating a win that came with only nine players in uniform. Somehow Brooklyn managed to keep it close and then turned it around after trailing 120-113 with 5:04 to play.

Spurs 115, Heat 111

In Miami, Keldon Johnson scored 21 points, Romeo Langford added 19 and San Antonio celebrated the 26th anniversary of Gregg Popovich's first game as coach by beating Miami.

Devin Vassell had 18 points for the Spurs, hitting a jumper with 1:13 left that put them ahead to stay. Jimmy Butler scored 30 points for Miami.

The Spurs were up 113-111 and used two timeouts with 14.7 seconds left to try to get the ball inbounds. But Zach Collins was called for his sixth foul on the second inbounds attempt, and Miami got the ball back with a chance to tie or win.

The Heat elected to go for the win — Tyler Herro missed a 3-pointer, then Caleb Martin missed a right-wing 3 as well, and the Spurs finished it off at the line.

The game was played 26 years to the day of Popovich's debut — a 93-76 loss at Phoenix on Dec. 10, 1996.

Nuggets 115, Jazz 110

In Denver, Nikola Jokic had 31 points, 14 assists and 12 rebounds in his 80th career triple-double and Denver held off undermanned Utah.

Jamal Murray added 30 points for the Nuggets, who scored the final five to finally put away a Utah team missing four of its top six scorers.

Making his second start of the season, Nickeil Alexander-Walker had a season-high 27 points for the Jazz. They lost for the eighth time in 11 games after a surprising 12-6 start.

Lauri Markkanen (illness) and Mike Conley Jr. (injury management) didn't make the trip to Denver, while Jordan Clarkson (bruised right hip) and Collin Sexton (right hamstring strain) were out with injuries for the Jazz.

Bulls 144, Mavericks 115

In Chicago, DeMar DeRozan had 28 points and nine rebounds and Chicago took advantage of NBA scoring leader Luka Doncic's absence to rout Dallas.

Doncic sat out with a strained right quadriceps. Swingman Josh Green also was out with a right elbow sprain and forward/center Maxi Kleber missed the game because of a sore right foot. Doncic had 33 points and 11 assists in the Mavericks' 106-105 home loss to Milwaukee on Friday night.

Nikola Vucevic added 20 points and eight rebounds and Ayo Dosunmu had 17 points to help Chicago win its second straight game. The Bulls shot a season-high 63.5% from the floor in their biggest-offensive output of the season.

Spencer Dinwiddie had 27 points for Dallas.

Clippers 114, Wizards 107

In Washington, Nicolas Batum made a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 23.8 seconds remaining and Los Angeles sent Washington to its sixth straight loss.

Paul George scored 36 points for the Clippers and John Wall added 13 in his return to Washington, but it was Batum who made big shots in the final quarter. He hit three 3-pointers in the last 4:52 and finished with 12 points.

Kyle Kuzma scored 25 of his 35 points in the first half for Washington. Kristaps Porzingis had 30 points and 15 rebounds.

Cavaliers 110, Thunder 102

In Cleveland, Caris LeVert scored 22 points, Evan Mobley had 21 points and 12 rebounds and Cleveland never trailed against Oklahoma City,

Jarrett Allen had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Darius Garland added 13 points and eight assists for Cleveland, which is an NBA-best 12-2 at home. All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell missed his second straight game with a sore right lower leg.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the third-leading scorer in the NBA at 31.1 points per game, led Oklahoma City with 23.

Trail Blazers 124, Timberwolves 118

In Portland, Ore., Damian Lillard had 36 points and eight assists, Anfernee Simons added 31 points and Portland beat Minnesota.

Portland overcame a 10-point deficit in the second half to beat Minnesota in the opener of a two-game set. They will meet again in Portland on Monday night.

Anthony Edwards led Minnesota with 26 points.

Rams' lost season suddenly brightened by Baker magic

By GREG BEACHAM
AP SPORTS WRITER

Now imagine what Baker Mayfield and Sean McVay can do with two practices together.

That's the prevailing thought around the Los Angeles Rams while they head into a highly enjoyable long weekend after their stunning, come-from-behind, last-minute 17-16 victory over the Las Vegas Raiders on Thursday night.

"That was a special night," McVay said Friday. "Baker and the receivers making those plays, it sure was fun to watch them do their thing."

Less than 48 hours after he arrived on the West Coast, Mayfield was throwing darts downfield and head-butting his new teammates in celebration after leading the Rams to their first win since Oct. 16.

His preparation time consisted of one light practice Wednesday with two 10-play periods behind center — and then Mayfield went into SoFi Stadium and took over the Rams' offense from the second series onward, eventually passing for 230 yards and leading two TD drives in the fourth quarter.

"Ball is ball," Mayfield said afterward. "And when you have guys like that around you that put you in a good spot and they help you out, and those guys did it."

Van Jefferson's 23-yard TD catch with 10 seconds to play considerably lightened the mood around the Rams (4-9), who ended a six-game skid and avoided matching their longest losing streak since coming home to LA. For at least another week, the 1999 Denver Broncos remain the only defending Super Bowl champion to lose 10 games.

The Rams have extra time to prepare for their visit to Green Bay next Monday night to begin the final stretch of a lost season that no longer seems so grim with Mayfield behind center. McVay confirmed he expects Mayfield to be his starting QB for the last four games.

"It feels really good right now, but there's a lot to get fixed," Mayfield said.

That's for sure: Even with Mayfield pushing the ball downfield in a way neither John Wolford nor Bryce Perkins had been capable of doing in Matthew Stafford's absence, the Rams still didn't get into the end zone until the final 3:19 against the Raiders. McVay believes Mayfield can do even more once he understands more of the Rams' playbook following this elongated break.

"It will be good to just take a deep breath and unpack the game from last night, and give the coaches a little bit of time," McVay said.

With their first-round pick next year belonging to Detroit, the Rams have no motivation to tank, obviously or indirectly. They'll try to win as many games as possible, including a New Year's Day showdown with their playoff-contending SoFi roommates, the Los Angeles Chargers.

WHAT'S WORKING

The Rams' remaining healthy defensive regulars stepped up, particularly while LA allowed just 67 yards and two first downs in the second half. Bobby Wagner had another standout game with 14 tackles to bolster his All-Pro credentials. Jalen Ramsey gave up a couple of stunning receptions by Davante Adams, but the Raiders' star wideout didn't have a catch in the second half as Ramsey and Co. locked him down. LA didn't allow a touchdown after Vegas' opening drive.

WHAT NEEDS HELP

Cam Akers and the Rams' offensive line both didn't contribute enough. Mayfield was sacked four times behind a line that committed a handful of costly penalties and didn't get much going for Akers, who averaged 3.5 yards per carry. Akers made back-to-back huge plays to end the Rams' penultimate scoring drive, but he also fumbled in the red zone in the first half.

STOCK UP

Although Jefferson caught the game-winner, Ben Skowronek was the Rams' unlikely hero at receiver with career highs of seven catches for 89 yards, including a 32-yard grab in double coverage on the decisive drive. Skowronek has sometimes seemed to be in over his head when asked to play extensively on offense in the past two seasons, but the former seventh-round pick is improving.

STOCK DOWN

Perkins has been on the Rams' 53-man roster for the past two seasons because McVay valued his potential and skill set, but it's now apparent McVay doesn't want his third-string QB to play ahead of a new waiver-wire acquisition, even one as talented as Mayfield. That's a waste of a roster spot that could have been used to bolster the Rams' depth.

INJURED

WR Jacob Harris will need surgery after tearing his pectoral muscle. Harris mostly contributed on special teams. ... DT Marquise Copeland has a high ankle sprain, further depleting the Rams' depth up front after losing Aaron Donald and A'Shawn Robinson to injury in recent weeks.

KEY NUMBER

3—Offensive assistant coaches already reported to be leaving McVay's staff for other jobs. The Rams haven't confirmed the latest possible departures from a staff with ample turnover during McVay's tenure, but they also pointedly haven't denied them. McVay acknowledged he has discussed a possible return to Kentucky by offensive coordinator Liam Coen after one year back with the Rams, but he doesn't think Coen has finalized the move.

NEXT STEPS

The Rams will have more plays in the package for Mayfield in Green Bay, and they'll be riding positive momentum for the first time in two months. That's about as good as it will get for LA late in this lost season.

Morocco reaches World Cup semifinals, tops Portugal, Ronaldo

By STEVE DOUGLAS
AP SPORTS WRITER

DOHA, Qatar (AP)—Africa finally has a team in the World Cup semifinals, and so does the Arab world.

Morocco delivered a seminal moment in the nearly 100-year history of soccer's biggest tournament, beating Cristiano Ronaldo and his Portugal team 1-0 Saturday in another shocking result in the first World Cup staged in the Middle East.

While a tearful Ronaldo headed right down the tunnel — and maybe into international retirement — after the final whistle, Morocco's players tossed their coach in the air and waved their country's flag as they linked arms in front of celebrating fans.

"Pinch me, I'm dreaming," Morocco goalkeeper Yassine Bounou said. "Morocco is ready to face anyone in the world. We have changed the mentality of the generation coming after us. They'll know Moroccan players can create miracles."

Youssef En-Nesyri scored the winning goal in the 42nd minute to continue an improbable run that has generated an outpouring of pride in the Arab world, inspiring displays in Arab identity from fans in different countries.

Africa is also rejoicing at finally having a nation advancing to the levels typically only reached by European or South American teams. Cameroon (1990), Senegal (2002) and Ghana (2010) all reached the quarterfinals but got no further.

Morocco has broken through, setting up a semifinal match against defending champion France.

The 37-year-old Ronaldo, one of soccer's greatest players but now a fading force, didn't start for the second straight game and came on as a substitute in the 51st minute. He missed his only chance to equalize in stoppage time.

The five-time world player of the year is set to finish his career without capturing the World Cup or ever getting to the final. He walked right off the field after the final whistle, only briefly stopped by two Morocco players wishing to shake his hand and a spectator who confronted him near the entrance to the tunnel, and was crying as he headed to the locker room.

AP
Morocco's Youssef En-Nesyri celebrates after scoring his side's first goal during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Morocco and Portugal, at Al Thumama Stadium in Doha, Qatar, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022.

If this is the end for Ronaldo at international level, he'll finish with 118 goals — a record in men's soccer — and a European Championship title but not soccer's biggest prize. He only got as far as the semifinals at the World Cup, in 2006.

"Our players are distressed," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos, who shrugged off questions about his own future and added that he didn't regret not starting Ronaldo. "Cristiano is a great player and he came on when we thought it was necessary. But no, no regrets."

There's no reason why this Morocco squad—coached by French-born Walid Regragui and containing 14 players born abroad—cannot go all the way to the title. They topped a group that included second-ranked Belgium and fellow semifinalist Croatia and have now taken down two of Europe's heavyweights in Spain—after a penalty shootout in the round of 16—and Portugal in the quarterfinals.

"Why shouldn't we dream of winning the World Cup?" Regragui said. "If you don't dream, you don't get anywhere. It doesn't cost you to dream."

Morocco's defense has yet to concede a goal by an opposition player at this year's World Cup —the only one it has allowed was an own-goal—and it stifled a Portugal team which beat Switzerland 6-1 in the last 16 to thrust itself among the favorites.

In a game played to the backdrop of non-stop whistles and jeers by Morocco's passionate fans, the team relied almost exclusively on counterattacks and scored from one of them.

A cross was swung in from the left and En-Nesyri leapt between Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa and defender Ruben Dias to head into the empty net.

Ronaldo, who will be 41 by the time of the 2026 World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada, barely got a touch of the ball until stoppage time when he got in behind Morocco's defense off a long ball forward. His low shot was saved by Bounou.

"I was afraid he might play," Regragui said of Ronaldo, "because I know he can score out of nothing."

Substitute Walid Cheddira was shown a red card for Morocco early in stoppage time for collecting a second yellow card in as many minutes.

After Portugal center back Pepe headed wide from inside the six-yard box in the sixth minute of added time, Ronaldo fell to his knees in dejection.

While Lionel Messi will be in the semifinals with Argentina, the other soccer great of this generation won't be.

INJURIES

Morocco might have to cope without its two starting center backs in the semifinals. Nayef Aguerd missed the game against Portugal with a thigh injury and Romain Saiss, Morocco's captain, was carried off on a stretcher with a suspected left hamstring injury. Another key member of the defense, left back Noussair Mazraoui, was absent because of an illness while Regragui said right back Achraf Hakimi has been playing with an injury.

RONALDO

Cristiano Ronaldo has failed to score in the knockout stage in any of the five World Cups he has played. He has scored eight goals in the group stage.

3 ACS

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In the women's 18-and-under category as the lone participant, Summer Angel Manahane came in with a time of 2:17:51.

In the women's open, Roxanne Soriano placed first with a time of 2:27:52, second was Marlene Lumabi with a time of 2:35:13, and third was Jeane Bracken with a time of 3:09:31.

In the women's 35-39 age group, Laarni Zapanta claimed first place with a time of 3:01:34.

In the women's 40-44 age group, Kathleen Tolentino came in first with a time of 2:29:00, second was Shiela Isla with a time of 2:34:14, and Pamela Walsh was third with a time of 2:39:42.

The women's 45-49 age group was dominated by An Bang with a time of 2:13:56 and Analyn De Luna with a time of 3:09:05.

The women's 55-59 age group was topped by Jessica Ortizo with a time of 2:15:44, followed by Marilou Carlos with a time of 2:33:21.

Kim Church came in first in the 55-59 age group with a time of 3:08:45.

A pair of Daniels topped the boys 18-and-under category, with Daniel Li coming in first with a time of 1:57:05; Daniel Song came second with a time of 1:58:03; and Steve Yang came in third with a time of 2:12:33.

In the men's open, Sildrey Veloria came in first with a time of 1:52:33, second was Andrei Ferrer with a time of 1:54:21, and Javin Okawa was third with a time of 2:06:22.

In the men's 35-39 age group, Chad Taflinger came in first with a time of 2:07:35, Adam Walsh came in second with a time of 2:16:17, and Bruce Wayne came in third with a time of 2:58:14.

Travis Spaeth came in first with a time of 2:05:19 in the men's 40-44 age group, Joshua Castro came in second with a time of 2:53:07, and Marlon Cabrera came in third with a time of 4:43:10.

Paul Manglona topped the men's 45-49 age group with a time of 2:23:02; Rommel Bartolo and Leo Wania both came after with an identical time of 2:30:14.

In the men's 50-54 age group, Matthew Furan came in first with a time of 2:02:23, Raymund Tolentino came in second with a time of 2:09:57, and Rolando Advincula came in third with a time of 2:56:01.

Stephen Dame came in first in the men's 55-59 age group with a time of 2:34:46. Ben Babauta came in second with a time of 3:29:08, while Marco Garcia came in third with a time of 4:08:39.

In the 60-and-up age group, Chongnam Lee came in first with a time of 1:57:17, Boboy Aguilar came in second with a time of 2:18:04, and Paul Kang came in third with a time of 2:28:59.

The Run Saipan club members' Top 3 men's finishers went to Sildrey Veloria, Matthew Furan, and Travis Spaeth. The Top 3 women's members went to Rosemarie Chisato, An Bang, and Jessica Ortizo.

Zhu said that the course was "very nice, very hard, [and] very challenging," and that he led the pack the whole way.

Peer pressure—the good kind—was the cause for Zhu to join the half marathon, saying he didn't want to join it at first, but was encouraged by his friend.

When asked what was the toughest part of the race, he said it was that he didn't know when the race would end and that he was just hoping to get to the finish line, "trying to keep in mind to not stop [running]."

Proud coach and pastor of ACS, Kok H. Pang said that the students joined because they wanted "to take the challenge, especially when they are still young."

Grant, a registered nurse who came to Saipan a year ago, said about the course, "it was better than I thought. I haven't ran a half [marathon] in a while so the flat part was really nice. It wasn't as windy… it was just the little part at the end that got my legs."

Results of the 5.5K community fun run winners will be published in tomorrow's edition of *Saipan Tribune*.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Agape Christian School students are the Top 3 runners in the Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon. Middle, gold medalist Samuel Zhu, silver medalist Stephen Chen, left of Zhu, and bronze medalist Jireh Wang, right of Zhu, pose for a photo with Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. and Atkins Kroll president Alex Yap in the awarding ceremony at the Banzai Cliff in Marpi.

FRANCE

From Page 20

setting up Kane for that chance to equalize again against his Tottenham teammate, France goalkeeper Hugo Lloris.

That's when he blasted his shot over.

"It is very difficult when you get a second penalty and, of course, a goalkeeper that knows you really well as well," Southgate said. "There's a lot involved in that situation. He's the best, but the best are still 85% (accurate), so even the best are going to miss at times."

Kane sank to his knees after the final whistle. His earlier goal put him in a tie with Wayne Rooney as his country's leading scorer, but that wasn't what mattered.

At the same time, an elated France team ran across the field in a blue wave of celebration before gathering together in a huddle, bouncing up and down joyously.

The singing and dancing continued into the locker room.

Morocco, the first African team to reach the semifinals of a World Cup, now stands in the way of France's bid to make history.

"Allow us to savour our victory tonight against a very good England team," Deschamps said when faced with questions about his next opponent.

For Southgate, it's time for reflection as he decides whether to carry on in the England job after leading the team through three tournaments since he was hired in 2016.

"Whenever I've finished these tournaments I've needed time to make the correct decision because emotionally you go through so many different feelings and the energy that it takes through these tournaments is enormous," he said. "I want to make the right decision, whatever that is for the team, for England, the FA (Football Association). I think it is right to take time to do that.

"I know in the past how much my feelings have fluctuated in the immediate aftermath of tournament."

BOLD APPROACH

Southgate has often been criticized for being too cautious in the biggest games, but he opted for a back four against France and loaded his team with attacking threats.

FLAT START

Maguire kicked the ball out of play at the very beginning of the match even though there was no pressure from a France opponent. Air was leaking out of the ball and Maguire informed the referee that a new one was needed.

‘All is not lost’ for U18 National Baseball Team

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

After the Saipan Baseball League announced that the CNMI U18 Junior National Baseball Team’s trip to Auckland, New Zealand for the World Baseball Softball Confederation Oceania qualifying tournament from Dec. 12 to 15 has been canceled, SBL president Jay Santos said that “all is not lost.”

Disappointing though it is that the team is not able to compete this time around, the team has a lot to look forward to next year as the SBL season may start in February and a tournament in Palau and South Korea is in the works.

“We’re optimistic that we’re going to have these guys play in the tournaments in Palau and Korea. We’ll know hopefully sooner rather than later,” said Santos.

The team will also continue their practices, although at a reduced schedule of two times a week. “The coaches are going to give them a Christmas break, but they are going to continue to practice and get ready for the Saipan Baseball [League] season.”

LEIGH GASES

The 18 players of the CNMI U18 Junior National Baseball Team along with their team manager and coaches pose for a photo last month during one of their practices.

As to when exactly the season will start, Santos said that they are working on it and that they “want to meet with all the prospective teams, coaches… hopefully by [the] first week of January there will be an announcement on that forthcoming as to what date…”

SBL announced the bad news to the team last Tuesday and that the reason they couldn’t go was because “the funding did not become available until last week and we tried our [hardest] to book a flight. We were able to find a flight but the itinerary was just too much for the boys. We’re talking [about] long layovers and… having to transit to two or three cities just to get to New Zealand… we thought it would be too taxing for the boys,” Santos told *Saipan Tribune* last Friday.

Santos added that “it’s just one of the things that are out of our hands—we had no control over. It’s not the end of the world. As much as these guys trained specifically for a competition, all it’s done is really opened up opportunities for us, for other things to try to get our boys to compete in.”

Charlie McDonald III, team captain of the national team, said “worked hard for it… we deserved to go, but there’s nothing we can do about it at this point. We’re still going to keep training and trying our best whenever we go off-island, but yeah I’m pretty disappointed… but there’s nothing we can do about it.”

The U18 Junior National Baseball Team consists of team captain McDonald, Angelo Igitol Jeremiah Suel III, Noah Aguon, Joell Borja, Justin Camacho, Joey Dela Cruz Jr., Joel Deleon Guerrero, Derrence Diaz, Jon Diaz, Achilles Evangelista, Christopher Gonzales, Andre Iguel, Keahie Omapas, Benjamin Palacios, Jylon Sablan, Michael Tomokane, and Jesus Tyquiengco. The team manager is Joey Dela Cruz and the coaches are Manny Sablan, Mike Cruz, Jeremiah Suel, and John Peter Sablan.

GCA varsity v-ball team undefeated

LEIGH GASES

Francisco M. Sablan Middle School girls varsity volleyball team in one of their games of the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

Following the footsteps of the high school Lady Eagles, the middle school girls of the Grace Christian Academy varsity volleyball team are currently undefeated with five straight wins after their recent victory last Tuesday in the NMIVA-PSS Interscholastic Middle School Volleyball League 2022-2023 at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

The Lady Eagles soared way above the sticky grasp of the Saipan International School Geckos’ varsity team in two fast and furious sets, 21-8, 21-10, with the Geckos unable to find a handle on the ball against speedy attacks at the net by the Eagles.

The Lady Eagles ’ varsity team consists of Sofia Gomez, Ella Hall, Dianna Zheng, Ana Villagomez, Misako Ota, Llyana Libut, Nevaeh Camacho, Sarah Lim, and Miley Mafnas.

In other results that night, the younger GCA junior varsity team won over Hopwood Middle School junior varsity via forfeit; SIS defeated Francisco M. Sablan Middle School in two sets, 21-2, 21-12; Saipan Community School collected their first win of the season against FMS varsity in two close sets, 21-19, 21-19; Dandan Middle School triumphed over ChaCha Ocean View Middle School, 21-19, 21-14; and Tanapag Middle School raged against Hopwood Middle School in three nail-biting sets, 21-8, 17-21, 15-11.

In the standings, SIS, TMS, and Hopwood Middle School varsity teams are right behind the Eagles with a 4-1 record each, while DMS is behind with a 2-3 card, followed by Mount Carmel School and COVMS with 1-4 records, and FMS and SCS with 1-5 each.

In the junior varsity standings, the Eagles are undefeated and on top as well with four wins, followed by TMS with three wins, SIS has a 3-2 card, DMS is at 1-2, FMS is 1-3, and HMS have no wins yet with five losses.

Varias tops Turkey Shootout

MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Ed Varias was the biggest winner in the Fil-Taga Golfers Association’s Turkey Shootout held last Nov. 19 at the Kingfisher Golf Links.

Varias tamed the greens and fairways of the Talafofo golf course for a net 70 to rule the club’s Thanksgiving tournament. He went home with $100 cash plus either a roaster turkey or ham.

Will Maui came in second with his 71 net and took the Fil-Taga November ace. He won $50 plus a box of Busch Light.

Third place went to Dan Ganacias after he fired a net 72. He pocketed $30 plus 12 cans of Busch Light.

Ruben Avendano wound up fourth after losing in a tiebreak with Ganacias. He came away with either a roasted turkey or ham, while completing the Top 5 was Jhun Cayetano with his net 73. He got 12 cans of Busch Light.

Burt Suda (net 74), Bae Hak Chon (net 77), Mike Cruz (net 79), Henry Bautista (net 83), and Das Krishnan (net 84) also took part in the Turkey Shootout and won various in-kind prizes.

Cayetano, Bautista, Maui, and Chon won the par 3 hole competitions.

With the November win, Maui now joins Mike Cruz (January), Lito Mendoza (February) Dan Ganacias (March), Freddie Cataluna (April), Varias (May), Romy Cayetano (June), Jess Yumul (July), Das Krishnan (August), Ronnie Santos (September), and William Retardo (October) for the season-ending Fil-Taga Ace of Aces Tournament.

Varias

SPAETH

From Page 20

son to the other competitors,” said Spaeth.

Regardless of the outcome and whether Team NMI brings home a medal or not, Spaeth said she’s always proud of how they are representing their home islands in Guam.

“I am so proud of the whole NMI team, we all did our best and had great results to reflect that. I’m looking forward to seeing how I can ride on the 100K. I’ve never rode in Guam so every hill and turn is new to me. At this point I am just focusing on embracing how painful it’s going to be and to hopefully finish strong. I am very thankful to all of the organizers and the support I have received to compete in the first Pacific Cup!”

Northern Mariana Islands Cycling Federation official and Team NMI manager Jay Diyco congratulated Spaeth for her third place finish in the road time trial.

“First of all I would like to congratulate her for her great performance. The whole NMICF is very proud of her. Congratulations also to Kathy for coming in fourth place at the time trial event.”

Aside from the CNMI and host Guam, five other island nations took part in the inaugural Pacific Cup—Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia, and Tahiti.

Guam cyclists include Ed Oingerang, Derek Horton, Dan Aponik, Blayde Blas, Jake Jones, Jennifer Camacho, Blanda Camacho, Aliza Haun, and Tara Tydingco

Fiji is made up of Jone Takape, Umendra Kumar, and Timaima Takape, while Samoa sent Natanielu Afoa and Jasmine Naea

Vanuatu’s lone ride is Didier Maucatel, while aside from Herzel and Frogier, New Caledonia flew in Herve Gane and Yohan Cema.

Tahiti was comprised of Kahiri Endeler and Bastien Guegano.

Comprising a time trial on Friday and a road race on Sunday, the Pacific Cup is held concurrently with the Tour of Guam. The two races provide an opportunity for riders across Pacific nations to test themselves in a strong regional competition.

The last Pacific island cycling event held was at the Pacific Games in Tahiti in 1995. The 27-year absence of an inter-island cycling competition has seen the Pacific Cup a highlight of the Oceania calendar, with strong entries from across the region.

As well as Spaeth and Ruszala, the NMI team for the Pacific Cup was also made up of Willy Barbo, Cesar Fortaleza, and Nomer Mangalinao.

Warriors beat Celtics 123-107 in NBA Finals rematch

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

'All is not lost' for U18 National Baseball Team

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3 ACS students top half marathon

By LEIGH GASES
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CORRESPONDENT

High school students from Agape Christian School are the Top 3 finishers in the inaugural and grueling Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon 21K course that snaked from Sugar Dock in Chalan Kanoa and ended at Banzai Cliff in Marpi last Saturday.

Racing past 68 other half marathon runners, Samuel Zhu, a 16-year-old sophomore; Stephen Chen, an 18-year old junior; and Jireh Wang, a 16-year-old sophomore, were the Top 3 finishers after all three crossed the finish line under two hours.

Zhu won gold with his time of 1:51:07, followed by silver for Chen who clocked in at 1:51:46, and right at his heels a few seconds later, Wang came in for bronze with a time of 1:51:54.

The women's overall winner is Savannah Grant who clocked in at 2:05:56, while silver went to Rosemarie Chisato at 2:10:32, and Emma Pang came in third with a time of 2:12:59.

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LEIGH GASES.
Agape Christian School's Samuel Zhu crosses the finish line of the Run Saipan Holiday Half Marathon near Banzai Cliff last Saturday.

Spaeth third in Pacific Cup time trials

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Robyn Spaeth, left, made a podium finish in last Friday's Inaugural Pacific Cup Guam. Also in photo are first and second placers Celine Herzel and Sandrine Frozier of New Caledonia.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Robyn Spaeth won a bronze medal in the road time trial of Oceania Cycling Confederation's Inaugural Pacific Cup last Friday in Guam.

The CNMI national triathlon team member in the last Pacific Mini Games finished with a time of 1:00.08.4 to place third in the women's competition topped by New Caledonia's Celine Herzel (54:00.5) with her countrywoman Sandrine Frozier (54:34.4) coming in second. The CNMI's Kathy Ruszala finished fourth in a time of 1:06:44.9.

"I was shocked to learn I placed but was thrilled with how the whole race went. This is the first time I have competed in a time trial so I couldn't really gauge how I was doing in compari-

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France advances to semifinals at World Cup, tops England 2-1

By JAMES ROBSON
AP SOCCER WRITER

AL KHOR, Qatar (AP)— France's players reacted as if they had already won the World Cup. What they were actually celebrating, though, was Harry Kane's missed penalty.

The match wasn't over yet, but France was leading 2-1 when Kane, England's captain and its best player, stepped up to take a penalty that would even the score in the 84th minute of Saturday's match at Al Bayt Stadium.

He sent his shot high over the bar and defending champion France held on to win 2-1 for a spot in the semifinals.

"That's football," England coach Gareth Southgate said. "There is nobody I would rather have in that situation and if we had one tomorrow, I'd feel exactly the same way."

France is looking to become the first country to successfully defend its World Cup title since Brazil — led by Pele — won back-to-back tournaments in 1958 and 1962. Italy also won two World Cups in succession in 1934 and 1938.

France will next face Morocco on Wednesday for a spot in the final.

"We are getting to the semifinals. We are closer to the final and this was an important achievement tonight and we can believe, but we have an important game on Wednesday," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "In the past the world champions didn't always do well in the next World Cup and we've managed to do that."

France knows that all too well.

As defending champions in 2002, the French team was eliminated in the group stage. France reached the final in 2006, losing to Italy in a penalty shootout, and then was knocked out in the group stage four years later in 2010.

On Saturday, Aurelian Tchouameni gave France the lead but England evened the score when Kane converted from the penalty spot in the 54th minute. Olivier Giroud put France back in front with a header in the 78th minute,

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AP
England's Harry Kane, right, and France's Aurelien Tchouameni challenge for the ball during the World Cup quarterfinal soccer match between England and France, at the Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar, Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022.